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JAMES and GRACE BOGGS
EDUARDO GALEANO
ERIC HOBSBAWM
MARCEL LIEBMAN

LENIN TODAY

RALPH MILIBAND
MARTIN NICOLAUS
WALTER RODNEY
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Special 128-page issue

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NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

In last month's issue of MR we offered to send free subs to prisoners and to provide them with MR Press books at 50 percent of list price. The response has been surprising. Here are excerpts from a letter from a prisoner in California: "I am glad to hear of your offer. . . . I believe that this is something that can be invaluable to many inmates of many prisons all over. After all, in places such as these, revolutions and revolutionaries are born. In places such as I am in, the most needed thing is social and political awareness. This is where people like you and magazines like MR are needed. I thank you for myself and for prisoners all over for the interest and help you have offered us. . . . As for books, it would be hard for you to realize the great need we have here for books dealing with the subjects MR is known for printing. We consider prison as a training ground for work in the movement against social injustice. . . . With your books we can obtain a greater understanding of what has happened and is happening in the world and in the movement against social injustice, and we can learn what we can do for our people, the oppressed people everywhere." The letter asks for ten subscriptions for a Mexican-American study group among the prisoners and promises more requests from an Afro-American study group. It also lists thirty-four titles of books which would be welcomed.

This suggests that the response to our offer may be a good deal larger than we originally anticipated, and it raises the question of financing the purchases of books for prisoners. To the extent possible, we will provide what are called "damaged" books (mostly perfectly readable) free in answer to these requests, but that will certainly not solve the problem. The

(continued on inside back cover)

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LENIN TODAY

Eight Essays on the Hundredth Anniversary of Lenin's Birth

Edited by Paul M. Sweezy and Harry Magdoff

New York and London

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FOREWORD

The letter inviting contributions to this special issue of MONTHLY REVIEW began as follows:

> As you are probably aware, next April [April 22] will mark the hundredth anniversary of Lenin's birth. After discussions with a number of the people to whom this letter is addressed, we have decided to devote a special issue of MR to commemorating the occasion. We would like to invite your collaboration.
>
> The purpose of the special issue will not be to eulogize Lenin or celebrate his achievements: others can be counted on to perform these functions. What MR can most usefully do, we think, is to bring together a number of thoughtful assessments of Lenin's main theoretical contributions in the light of subsequent developments and the present state of the world revolutionary movement. Perhaps the most important result we could hope to achieve would be to stimulate younger people who have only recently come to the movement to undertake their own study of Lenin's works.

The articles contributed in response to this invitation deal with many, though by no means all, of the subjects which concerned Lenin in the course of his career as revolutionary leader. Two (Boggs and Liebman) discuss the revolutionary role of the vanguard party, drawing or implying conclusions which are sharply divergent if not entirely contradictory. Two (Galeano and Rodney) analyze problems and forms of imperialist exploitation in Africa and Latin America. Two (Hobsbawm and Nicolaus) explore the content and implications of Lenin's theory of the labor aristocracy in the advanced capitalist countries. One (Miliband) examines Lenin's theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, concluding that it raised but did not answer crucial questions concerning the exercise of political power in the aftermath of a successful socialist revolution. And one (Thomson) argues the case that Mao Tse-tung is the great defender and continuer of Leninism in our time.

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As even this very brief summary indicates, a rich variety of subjects and viewpoints awaits the reader. It is impossible to agree with all the interpretations and opinions represented —there are too many differences for that—and unlikely that many readers will have reached their own conclusions on all the important issues raised. Therein, we hope, lies the stimulus to further study and thought.

We take this opportunity to pay our own tribute to the memory and achievements of the great revolutionary. No greater compliment or higher praise can be tendered than to say that his name is rightly linked with that of Karl Marx to designate the world philosophical and scientific view which is guiding the struggles of the oppressed to build a new world worthy of human beings.

Paul M. Sweezy
Harry Magdoff

March 15, 1970

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James and Grace Boggs

THE ROLE OF THE VANGUARD PARTY

All over the world this spring, wherever Marxist-Leninist parties have come to power, there will be mammoth celebrations of the hundredth anniversary of Lenin's birth. Where Marxist-Leninist parties are still striving to win power, often struggling with each other over how to achieve it, celebrations will also take place. There will even be celebrations by parties that call themselves Marxist-Leninist but have never even conceived of themselves taking power. Liberals also will take advantage of the occasion to try to discredit Lenin, exposing what they call the "bureaucratic tendencies" inherent in his concept of the vanguard party and trying to make him responsible for everything that has taken place in Soviet Russia since his death. Whatever one's political complexion, everyone is compelled to recognize that what Lenin thought and did has fundamentally altered the course of the world in which we live.

Today many people talk about Marxism-Leninism without any understanding of the historical development of Marxist thought which Lenin represents, much less of the historical developments in revolutionary politics that have taken place in other parts of the world since Lenin.

Marx, writing in nineteenth-century Western Europe where the rapidly advancing industrial revolution was creating a powerful capitalist class and a burgeoning working class, developed a scientific, i.e., historical and dialectical, method for analyzing the conflict of social forces developing inside capitalist production, projecting the working class—disciplined, united, and organized by the process of production itself—as the social force to overthrow capitalism and institute a new mode of socialized

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production. Lenin, tackling the problems of backward Tsarist Russia a generation later, utilized Marx's method to analyze the development of Russian capitalism, to anticipate the class struggle inseparable from this development, and to project the socialist revolution as the only solution. But when the Russian working class began its economic struggles, Lenin did not wait upon its "inevitable" revolt to bring about the socialist revolution. Instead, practically single-handedly, he assumed the awesome responsibility of building the kind of tightly disciplined organization which would be able to take state power at the head of the Russian working class and all the other oppressed and discontented strata of Russian society. Without this party which it took Lenin seventeen years of unpublicized, protracted struggle to build, the power which lay in the streets in 1917 Russia might have ended up in the same kind of hands which picked it up in 1968 France. What few people realize is that until 1917 Lenin rarely addressed himself to a mass audience, either in writing or speaking, or appeared on the public platform. Instead, he concentrated his extraordinary abilities and energies on the task which he had concluded was decisive to the success of the Russian Revolution: the building of an apparatus of dedicated, disciplined revolutionists to lead the masses in the struggle for power.

For the revolutionary movements developing today in every country, the great contribution of Lenin was the clarity with which he put forward and acted upon his fundamental convictions regarding the vanguard party: (1) that the purpose of a revolutionary party is to take absolute power in order to revolutionize the economic and social system as the only way of resolving fundamental popular grievances; (2) that it is absolutely essential to build a revolutionary vanguard party if you are serious about taking power and not just playing with the phrase; and (3) that a revolutionary party can only be built by (a) unceasing ideological struggle, (b) strict discipline, (c) organized activity of every member, and (d) merciless self-criticism.

In the United States, as the black movement struggles to define its goals and the means to achieve them, the question of what constitutes a black revolutionary party is going to become increasingly the center of discussion and controversy. In order

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for this discussion and controversy to be meaningful, the black movement will have to make a serious study of the concept of the vanguard party as developed and practiced by its originator. To believe that the black revolutionary movement can evade such a study because Lenin was white and European would be just as ridiculous as for an African freedom fighter to refuse to fly an airplane because the Wright brothers were white Americans. Blacks don't refuse to drive Cadillacs because they are made by General Motors or to watch television because Philco (Ford) manufactures TV sets. Whatever has been achieved in human history, whether technological or political, blacks have a right to inherit. The very high development of the theory and practice of the vanguard party as originated by Lenin in Russia, and subsequently developed by Mao and Ho in Asia and Amilcar Cabral in Africa, belongs to all the oppressed people of the world, providing those who seek to end the domination of man by man with guidelines which they ignore at their peril. It must be borne in mind at the same time that these guidelines can be applied only in relation to the specific conditions of a particular country and only by an organization that has developed out of indigenous forces and is not totally dependent upon external or foreign aid for its existence.*

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* In the last period because of the understandable concentration on black pride and black consciousness, there has been a tendency among black would-be revolutionaries to refuse to have anything to do with anything or anyone that was not all-black. The result in some cases has been ludicrous, e.g., black militants unable to discuss theoretical and political questions among themselves because the only language they have in common is English, or black history teachers glorifying African rulers of the past who were no less abusive of their subjects than white tyrants of the same epoch.

As Black Nationalism undergoes the necessary transition into Black Revolutionary Nationalism, what is and what is not historically relevant to black people will have to be redefined. Black revolutionary historians cannot limit themselves to studies that inspire black people with pride and consciousness. They must also give the black movement that sense of historical continuity with a revolutionary past which every revolutionary movement needs in order to develop a sound basis for its present theory and practice. In the very difficult period ahead, every source of theoretical and political strength must be mined. The richest source, apart from the ongoing struggle of the masses, is undoubtedly what has been attempted by other revolutionists in this and other countries. Thus black revolutionary historians must provide the movement with critical studies in two main arenas:

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Fifty years ago the Old Left tried to adapt Lenin's view of the vanguard party to party-building in the United States. However, they were responding more to revolutionary momentum in Russia and Europe than to conditions in the United States. It was therefore impossible for them really to understand Lenin's concept of the vanguard party which had been developed to resolve the specific historical contradiction recognized by Lenin in the Russia of 1900, namely, the narrow or superficial scope of revolutionary work by Russian militants in comparison with the breadth of the spontaneous movement of Russian workers. The dilemma of white radicals in this country has been and still is the exact opposite, namely, their own intensive theoretical and organizational activity compared with the narrow scope of the spontaneous movement in the American working class which, nevertheless, in their theory remains the chief social force for the American revolution. Only for a brief period during the thirties was this not the case. But by that

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First, with regard to black liberation leaders of the past (from Toussaint L'Ouverture, Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, Frederick Douglass, Marcus Garvey, W. E. B. DuBois, to Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, Rap Brown, and Huey Newton), what each achieved, what each was unable to achieve, and how much this falling short of the goal of black liberation was due to objective conditions of the time and how much to subjective factors, i.e., inadequate revolutionary theory and practice. In this respect the black movement in the United States has an incalculable advantage over white radical groupings because it has this tremendous wealth of historical experiences to draw upon and evaluate. By contrast, white "revolutionaries" throughout American history from the Founding Fathers to the present, with the sole exception of the Abolitionists, have always defined the American problem in terms of white-white relations, dealing with white-black oppression, if at all, only as an afterthought.

Second, with regard to revolutionary movements and the theory and practice of revolutionary leaders of the whole world, and particularly those of that part known as the Third World. Until the black revolutionary movement is ready to take seriously the scientific approach to revolution developed by Marx, Lenin, Ho, and Giap, it will still be depending upon mystical or external guidance to achieve the power which can only be achieved by the most rigorous scientific appraisal of social forces. Mao, Ho, and Cabral did not reject the necessity for a scientific approach to revolution because the founders of this approach were white. They used the method of Marx and Lenin, being careful at the same time to distinguish between the specific conditions of their own countries and those of Europe and Russia.

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time the Marxist parties in this country had oriented their politics so completely around what was happening in Soviet Russia that they had not developed any perspective or program for taking power in the United States. Having occupied themselves for so long in proving a theory rather than programing for revolution, they were unprepared for anything more than militant trade-union leadership when the industrial workers erupted in the thirties.

Today black revolutionaries are confronted with a contradiction very similar to that faced by Lenin when he first began to lay the foundations of the vanguard party. Ever since 1964 the black masses in every Northern city have been either in, or on the verge of, spontaneous eruption. Every year millions of black people, and particularly black youth, are made "ready for anything" by the worsening conditions in every black community, the obvious inability of white power to cope with the critical social problems of an advancing technology, the mushrooming of white counter-revolutionary groupings, and the growing division among whites and within the ruling class as to which course to pursue to overcome the crisis. As in Lenin's day (and in his words) the movement has already produced "enormous numbers of people . . . who desire to protest, who are ready to render all the assistance they can in the fight against absolutism. . . . At the same time we have no people, because we have no leaders . . . no talented organizers capable of organizing extensive and at the same time uniform and harmonious work that would give employment to all forces. . . ." (*What Is To Be Done?*) The scope of spontaneous activity among the black masses has been growing far beyond the capacity of the black movement to provide revolutionary political leadership.

For the black movement and the black community the necessity for rapid development of a party able to give revolutionary leadership to the masses is not an abstract question. It is a matter of the utmost urgency. Every day thousands of blacks are made "ready for anything," often by a "routine" incident of police, foreman, school-principal, or social-worker brutality. Periodically a major "incident," such as the murder of Martin Luther King or Fred Hampton, transforms millions of blacks

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into potential revolutionaries. Just because a vanguard party with a revolutionary perspective, program, and trained cadres is not at hand to give direction to these rebels does not mean that they disappear from the historical stage. Rather they find other outlets for their rebellious energies. They drift from one Black Nationalist grouping or Black Power street gang to another, going "wherever the action is," or engage in different forms of hustling or banditry which as often as not are directed against other members of the black community. The result in the black community is a sense of unending crisis, chaos, and desperation from top to bottom. The situation in Northern cities is thus beginning to resemble more and more that of the Chinese countryside before the Communist Party and the Red Army under Mao were able to develop the revolutionary perspective, the cadres, and the program to politicize and incorporate the unemployed or underemployed youth who were pillaging the peasants in independent gangs or as part of the numerous warlord armies.

Before the black movement can summon up the profound theoretical and practical energies to create a vanguard party, it must first destroy—root and branch—the illusion that the spontaneous eruptions of the black masses are sufficient to achieve revolutionary change. Not until this illusion has been completely eliminated can black would-be revolutionaries apply themselves to the task of building a vanguard party with the urgency and energy that are required. Only then will they be ready to face up to the awesome responsibility which Lenin faced, of building that structure without which there can be no successful revolution. To destroy every remnant of this illusion in himself and those around him was the task Lenin set himself in *What Is To Be Done?*

It is only since the Watts rebellion in 1965 that the black movement and black leaders have begun to rely upon the spontaneous eruption of the masses. Prior to 1965, when the action was chiefly in the South, black militants recognized the need for organization as the only means for initiating mass action and as the necessary condition for survival in a society where open dictatorship and violence by whites left no room for democratic illusions. (Organization in the South in that period did

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not, of course, take the form of building a revolutionary party, since the aim of the movement was not Black Power but integration.)

In the last five years, however, side by side with the talk of Black Power, black leaders have acted as if all they had to do in order to advance the revolution is to act as spokesmen for the "brothers on the street." This is due, first of all, to the speed with which the brothers on the city streets have exploded, as if in a chain reaction, from city to city, giving the movement the assurance that "something is always going to happen." Secondly, the pride, aggressiveness, and unity which these eruptions have unleashed in all segments of the black community have created a sense of increasing excitement and momentum. And, finally, the skill with which a threatened white power structure has manipulated TV exposure of black militants and black salesmen for the American Way of Life (commercials), funding of community projects ("reparations"), highly visible and highly paid jobs for black careerists, and a steady stream of black publications, has created the widespread illusion that the actual and/or threatened spontaneous eruptions of the black masses are bringing Black Power closer.

Meanwhile, in fact, overall conditions in the black community have been deteriorating, while at the same time the spontaneous activities of the black street masses and the much publicized but futile reform efforts of the white power structure have aroused the "white backlash," which is only another name for the fascist counter-revolution.

There is little point in complaining about the skillful use of the Almighty American Dollar to co-opt Black Power or the rise of the fascist counter-revolution. In confusing, undermining, and mobilizing to repress the black movement, white power is only doing what its self-interest dictates. If the fault lies anywhere, it is with the black movement for failing to arm the black community theoretically and politically against the predictable strategy and tactics of the enemy and to make clear that fascism cannot be stopped short of a total revolution dedicated to ending man's domination of man and his fear of those whom he dominates.

To do this, the black movement must recognize and keep

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pointing out the limits of what can be achieved by the black masses, for the same reason that Lenin insisted on the limits of what could be achieved by the spontaneous eruptions of Russian workers. The spontaneity of the workers does not take them beyond the level of the immediate, palpable, concrete interests of the everyday economic struggle, as Lenin kept pointing out. In a similar vein, black revolutionists must realize that the spontaneous eruptions of the black masses do not take them beyond the demand that white power alleviate their accumulated grievances, no matter how angry or explosive the masses are or how much Black Power talk and symbolism accompany their actions. Reliance upon spontaneity is, therefore, a form of liberalism because, in effect, it increases the illusion that the issues and grievances of the masses can be resolved without taking power away from those in power.

A revolutionary party becomes historically necessary and justified when the contradictions and antagonisms of a particular society have created a mass social force whose felt needs cannot be satisfied by reform but only by a revolution which takes power away from those in power. In addition to mobilizing this mass social force around its own grievances, the revolutionary party must then be ready to fulfill two additional tasks: (1) it must be able to project the vision of a new society which will solve these grievances by destroying the system that has created the domination of man over man, thus making life more human for everybody; and (2) it must have developed cadres of leaders with whom the masses can identify, and programs of struggle that will take the masses stage by stage to ever higher levels of political struggle, political consciousness, and actual control of facets (or bases) of power. Thus the revolutionary vanguard party serves the function of escalating the vision and leading the masses from a sense of grievance or unsatisfied *wants* to an awareness of social *needs,* or what is necessary to remedy their grievances. By escalating the struggles of the masses, it raises their consciousness beyond the point of blaming the enemy for their plight and/or depending on him to alleviate it, to the point of depending upon their own efforts and their own power and responsibility to effect real change. At this stage, when the masses are already in motion,

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any party or organization which simply keeps them in a high state of agitation, confrontation, or mobilization, is not a revolutionary party, no matter what its claims. A revolutionary vanguard party cannot limit itself to the demands of the masses; it begins to make demands upon the masses themselves to exert greater power and greater responsibility.

"The greater the spontaneous uprising of the masses, the more widespread the movement becomes, so much the more rapidly grows the demand for greater consciousness in the theoretical, political, and organizational work" of the revolutionary leadership, Lenin insisted. At this point militancy without ideology becomes as dangerous as theory without practice. Lenin accused those who passively adapted themselves to spontaneity of tailing or degrading themselves to the level of the masses instead of raising the masses to a higher political and social level. He called them "opportunists," professing to lead the masses when in fact they were only taking advantage of the masses' spontaneous activity to speak for the masses. To the counter-accusation that he was setting up a centralized apparatus to control the mass movement, he replied that a tight organization is necessary not only to combat the opportunists and moderates but to safeguard the movement against the premature actions undertaken by those who mistake the beginning of a struggle for its end.

The polemical style of Lenin's politics has turned off black revolutionaries because their chief acquaintance with it is in the form which it has assumed in the American Marxist groupings, of debates and discussion about what should be done in other countries, or in relation to the black movement to which white radicals cannot in any case give leadership. It is only when you recognize that Lenin's opponents represented real tendencies and real dangers to a spreading mass movement needing revolutionary direction that you can understand why he waged such a merciless ideological struggle against opportunists, liberals, and anarchists.

In the United States black militants have shirked the responsibility for this kind of ideological struggle, partly because of the deep hunger for unity which exists in all sections of the black movement, and partly because of the general political

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backwardness of this country which makes it much easier to deal with one's political opponents by character assassination and physical force than by political criticism and ideological struggle. The fact is that, ever since the emergence of the Black Power stage in 1966, serious political differences over the meaning of Black Power have been inevitable. Because these differences have not been clarified politically, they have tended to appear personal, and the movement has declined accordingly. Tendencies which could easily have developed a practical working relationship with one another in action have tried to live together within the same political organization until the political differences have festered into bitter antagonisms. What the black movement has not understood is that the clarification of political differences through ideological struggle by no means implies that there should be disunity in action, particularly on questions of defense against the common enemy or in the struggle for community control of various institutions inside the black community, objectives on which all tendencies in the black movement are agreed. The creation or encouragement of a United Front or Fronts to implement this unity in action and the development of the proper relations between the revolutionary party and the United Front are critical to the success of any revolution. But the first step in creating correct relations is a clear distinction between the purposes and organization of the vanguard party and the purposes and organization of the United Front.*

"We must first divide and then unite," Lenin kept saying. "Better fewer but better." A revolutionary party cannot be built on the quicksand of ideological confusion. Obviously there are a lot of people in the black movement whose political positions are dead wrong, and someone has to have the courage to say it, even if it busts wide open the façade of unity. A political split, like a divorce, is often healthier than trying to live together in the same house when you have fundamental differences. Blacks

* To learn more about the theory and practice of building the United Fronts which, in the course of protracted *popular* struggles over concrete issues and the control of social institutions, develop into dual-power structures or parallel hierarchies, we have to look, not to Lenin and the revolution in Russia, but to the revolutions which combine national and social struggle, e.g., in China, Vietnam, and Guinea-Bissau.

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don't all think alike just because they are black any more than Africans or Chinese or Vietnamese do. There are political differences inside the black movement representing different socio-economic layers inside the black community. It is better to start the vanguard party from scratch with the serious few who are committed to the perspective of making the revolution that is necessary to meet the needs of the deepest layers of the black community than with many assorted persons who are all going in different directions and who are therefore bound to split at the moment of crisis, just when the need is for maximum organizational strength and unity. This does not mean that those who cannot or will not accept the ideology and discipline of the vanguard party cannot play a role in the movement or in concrete struggles for liberation that will culminate in the taking of power. But their place is in the various organizations of mass struggle, not in the vanguard party.

At the present time, among those who have been active in the movement over the past few years, there are quite a few people who are considering the formation of a black revolutionary party. Many of them believe that their past record of dedicated struggle in the movement is sufficient qualification for membership or leadership in a revolutionary party. They do not understand that with the emergence of Black Power the black movement left behind it the old stage of reform and integration and entered on a new stage of revolutionary struggle. As long as the black movement and black people were seeking primarily to reform or integrate into the system, what was required from black leadership was relatively simple. It was the outspoken, relentless condemnation of racism, in all its forms, arousing the black masses to a heightened sense of indignation and grievance against the society. This is something that black leaders have always done well and which the Black Power spokesmen of the past period have done superbly. However, ever since the movement changed direction, from being essentially an attempt to reform the system to a revolutionary struggle for power, what has been required from black leadership has been much more difficult because it is something for which blacks have had little previous training. Revolutionary struggle for power requires less rhetoric and more calculation. It re-

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quires a different kind of organization with a different, more scientific ideology; different, more disciplined, and committed members who are so convinced of the need for Black Revolutionary Power that the concept could be erased from their minds only by death itself; different, more strategically developed programs for escalating struggles; different, more carefully worked out structures to implement these programs; and different, less flamboyant leadership.

When Lenin first began to build the party in the early 1900s, intellectuals like Martov who had been active and outspoken wanted to be members, but they did not want to break with their past ideas, practices, and associates, and accept the discipline of a party branch or unit. This refusal to break with the politics of the past was the issue around which the split took place at the 1903 Congress of the Russian Party, between the Bolsheviks who stood for a tightly disciplined organization and the Mensheviks who wanted a loose structure which would leave members free to speak, write, and move about as they had been doing. The same question is bound to arise in the organization of any black revolutionary party today. It has already surfaced in a number of black organizations, usually during or after a crisis when the opportunities to take the center of the public stage are most numerous and most difficult to resist. This is not because of the lack of sincerity or dedication of any one individual but because the transition to a new stage of political struggle usually requires new people who can meet the new tasks and/or old experienced people who can make a serious self-criticism of their previous political habits and transform their political personalities to meet the new needs. This kind of self-evaluation and transformation is not easy for most people to make. As the objective situation becomes more revolutionary, an increasing number of militants begin to feel the need of an organization to help them make the many decisions that now become pressing. How to respond to the growing demands from the masses for leadership or to the provocations and opportunities proffered by the enemy to render one useless; what to do, what not to do, how to organize one's time and energies most effectively—all these become decisions beyond the capacity of a single individual to make. On the other hand, these

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same individuals can find the discipline of the party constraining or "bureaucratic" unless they are continually internalizing through criticism and self-criticism the urgent necessity for a highly organized, disciplined structure as the key to black liberation at this stage.

Recent revolutionary history in Asia, Africa, and Latin America has demonstrated that the most effective revolutionists are those who insist upon this kind of self-criticism and transformation as a normal procedure inside the organization, because they understand that the political energy generated thereby can itself become a force for rapid political development. On the other hand, where nationalist leaders have not insisted upon building self-criticism into the operations of the political organization, political weaknesses have become entrenched, and the masses and the new elite have become more vulnerable to neocolonialist subversion.

Black people are not only powerless, which is the condition of any oppressed people; they are also undeveloped, because of the national character of their oppression which is similar to that of a colonial people. It is no accident that the concept of rapid political development through self-criticism, originated by Lenin in backward Russia, has achieved its highest development in colonial, i.e., systematically exploited and systematically undeveloped countries like Vietnam, China, Cuba, and Guinea-Bissau. To build the party that is necessary to take power and revolutionize society, the members of the party themselves must undergo rapid political development into new people. The only means available to them to achieve this is also the best means, i.e., the method of constant struggle, constant criticism and constant transformation, utilizing the energy created by the dynamic of error to advance the political maturity of the organization, getting rid of every vestige of liberalism, opportunism, sectarianism, adventurism, egoism, and every tendency towards "militarism" or the separation of military from political struggle. The ideological struggle against other political tendencies and against remnants of these tendencies in every member removes political education from the sphere of abstract generalizations about other revolutions which come so easily to intellectual revolutionaries. It compels the revolutionary organization to de-

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velop its own revolutionary concepts from its concrete experiences and practices in party-building, internally and in relation to the masses and other organizations.

In this article we have tried to point out some of the important lessons in building a revolutionary party that the black movement in the United States can learn from Lenin. But everything that Lenin said and did cannot be applied automatically and mechanically to the American Revolution. Black revolutionaries must analyze for themselves the specific situation in the United States in this, the last third of the twentieth century. They must determine for themselves the critical contradiction in this country, which is at one and the same time the technologically most advanced and politically most backward country in the world. From this determination they must project the fundamental goal of a revolution in this country: to create a society of politically conscious, socially responsible individuals able to use technology for the purpose of liberating and developing humanity. They must arrive at their own appraisal of the revolutionary social forces available to achieve this revolutionary humanist objective and of the interrelation between these revolutionary social forces and other social forces in the country. They must make their own appraisal of the present stage of struggle and the programs necessary to advance the struggle towards the projected objective. (See James Boggs, *Racism and the Class Struggle,* Monthly Review Press, forthcoming; also *Manifesto for a Black Revolutionary Party,* Pacesetters Publishing House, P.O. Box 3281, Philadelphia 19121.)

Scientific, i.e., dialectical and historical, method requires the systematic examination of the specific conditions, contradictions, and antagonisms in one's own country and one's own time; the projection of fundamental solutions to these contradictions; and programs of struggle to achieve these solutions. It is only because he understood this, which is the essence of the scientific method, that Lenin was able not only to build the party which led the Russian masses to victory over Tsarism, but also to make the analysis of imperialism and of the colonial struggle (neither of which had matured in the time of Marx), and from this analysis to recognize the revolutionary character of

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the nationalist movements in Ireland, Asia, Africa, and among black people in the United States.

Most old radicals thinking about Lenin in the United States today are still thinking of what he did in Russia and the concepts he evolved to achieve the Russian Revolution. In that sense they have become dogmatists, not recognizing that Lenin was building a party for his time, to change intolerable conditions in his country, based on the analysis of the specific conditions in that country. Lenin is not relevant to us unless we have done the same for this country and for our time. Similarly they do not recognize that Marx was writing at a specific stage in Western history and that, if he were living today, he would have advanced his theory far beyond what he wrote in the middle of the nineteenth century, for the simple reason that society itself has advanced to another historical stage.

The Russian Revolution, like every successful revolution since then, took place in a country where the working class was a small fraction of the population. Lenin would have been the first to recognize that a revolution not led by the working class could take place because he recognized that the rising colonial world was composed primarily of oppressed peoples who were not proletarians but who were nevertheless compelled because of their dual oppression by native and foreign rulers to overthrow their oppressors and institute a new economic, social, and political order. The one thing which Lenin was firm about, regardless of the conditions varying from country to country, was the need for a vanguard party whose members recognize the necessary difference between themselves and the revolutionary masses in terms of a firm ideology, programmatic commitment, and discipline, before they go to the masses to interact with them and give them leadership. If this distinction is blurred, what comes into being is not a revolutionary vanguard party but a mass party, however small in actual size, which incorporates into its membership those who should in fact be its followers and supporters. Such a party cannot lead the masses; it can only tailgate or follow after them.

For revolutionists all over the world, the study of Lenin is relevant, *not* from the standpoint of his analysis of the Russian working class as the main social force for the Russian Revolu-

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tion, but for his concept of building a revolutionary vanguard party on the basis of that section of the population of a given country which is both the most oppressed and the chief revolutionary social force. If the working class constitutes the chief revolutionary social force in a particular country, the revolutionary party must be built on it. If the chief revolutionary social force is the peasantry, as in China, then base the party on the peasantry. If it is the black masses, as in the United States, then build the revolutionary party on the basis of the black revolutionary social forces.

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Eduardo Galeano

LATIN AMERICA AND THE THEORY OF IMPERIALISM

While Lenin was writing his fundamental work on imperialism in the spring of 1916, the imperialist powers were locked in a bloody conflict for control of the world. This century of ours is passing with the speed of several millennia. In the second imperialist war to redivide the world, it was possible, thanks to the progress that had been made in killing our fellowmen on the earth and in the sky, to reap an even more awesome harvest—the survivors were able to count ten times as many corpses as in the First World War. And today their past feats are being overshadowed by even greater accomplishments. More bombs have been dropped in an undeclared war on a small, poor country in Southeast Asia than fell on Germany, Italy, and Japan in the 1940s. The same giant that is conducting the bloodbath in Vietnam is simultaneously sending astronauts to the distant surface of the moon. Wernher Von Braun is worried about raw materials. "In 1970," he announced, "we intend to orbit a space laboratory at an altitude of 400 kilometers. . . . We will be able to explore all the riches of the earth from this marvellous observation platform: the unknown oil deposits, the copper and zinc mines. . . ."

More than half a century after Lenin wrote his book, monopoly capitalism has shown that it has more than the proverbial nine lives; and imperialism, its logical extension, has survived with unsuspected vigor, centered now around a single great power. But the instruments of this universal system of exploitation are no longer simply the ones Lenin described. Imperialism has evolved and has become more effective, both in robbing as well as in killing. It has polished its methods, ex-

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tended into new areas, and constructed new models of domination that were unknown on the eve of the Russian Revolution. In this era of electronic computers, the "multinational" corporations do not count their profits on their fingers, to put it mildly.

The goal of this brief paper, a very modest tribute to Lenin's brilliant work and exemplary life, is to provide some data and ideas that may help to clarify certain new features in the system of seizing the world's markets and national resources. We are concerned above all with imperialism in Latin America at the present time—an interlocking system of conquest, domination, extortion, and pillage, in which deceptive characteristics are not lacking.

Colonialism and Dependence

In *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism,* Lenin warned, in refuting Kautsky, that the domination of finance capital not only does not lessen the inequalities and contradictions present in the world economy, but on the contrary accentuates them. Time has passed and proven him right. The inequalities have become sharper. Historical research has shown that the distance that separated the standard of living in the wealthy countries from that of the poor countries toward the middle of the nineteenth century was much smaller than the distance that separates them today. The gap has widened. In 1850 the per capita income in the industrialized countries was 50 percent higher than in the underdeveloped countries. To have an idea of the progress that has been achieved in the *development of inequality,* we have only to listen to President Richard Nixon: ". . . and I think about what this hemisphere, the new world, will be like at the end of this century. And I consider that if the present growth rates of the United States and of the rest of the hemisphere have not changed, at the end of this century the per capita income in the United States will be 15 times higher than the income per person of our friends, our neighbors, the members of our family in the rest of the Hemisphere."[1]*

* Notes will be found at the end of the article.

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The oppressed nations will have to grow much more rapidly just to *maintain* their relative backwardness. Their present low rates of development feed the dynamic of inequality: the oppressor nations are becoming increasingly rich in absolute terms, but they are richer still in relative terms. The overall strength of the imperialist system rests on the necessary inequality of its component parts, and that inequality is achieving ever greater proportions. Capitalism is still capitalism, and unequal development and widespread poverty are still its visible fruits. "Centralized" capitalism can afford the luxury of creating and believing its own myths of opulence, but myths cannot be eaten, and the poor nations that constitute the vast capitalist "periphery" are well aware of this fact. Imperialism has "modernized" itself in its methods and characteristics, but it has not magically turned into a universal philanthropic organization. The system's greed grows with the system itself.

Nowadays imperialism does not require the old-style colonial administrations. The archaic Portuguese model of control over Angola and Mozambique is no longer the most "convenient." Lenin described the reality of his time, saying that "naturally . . . finance capital finds it most 'convenient,' and is able to extract the greatest profit from a subordination which involves the loss of the political independence of the subjected countries and peoples." In his report to the Twenty-second Congress of the CPUSSR in 1961, Nikita Khrushchev reached the conclusion that "imperialism has irrevocably lost its control over most of the peoples of the world." According to his report, 40.7 percent of the population of the world, without counting the socialist countries, had won their independence after 1919, and the total number of people living in colonies, semi-colonies, and dominions included, at the beginning of the 1960s, less than 3 percent of the world's population. "The revolutions of national liberation have dealt a demolishing blow to the colonial Bastille," Khrushchev said. "Forty-two sovereign states have emerged on the ruins of the colonial empires."

In this connection, it can well be said that Latin America is a prophetic zone within the Third World. The political independence of almost all of the Latin American countries dates back to the beginning of the nineteenth century. *It was as*

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a result of that independence, however, that Latin America consolidated its dependence. Power passed from the "foreign" viceroys to "national" merchants advocating free trade, but it was precisely then that all obstacles were removed for the total incorporation of the entire region into the international division of labor that was centered in England. The words "sovereignty" and "independence" were not then, and still are not in most cases, more than the lip service that vice pays to virtue. In reality, most Latin American countries have never controlled their own internal markets nor the destination of the economic surplus generated by their productive forces. The control of their basic resources has always been in foreign hands, either through direct appropriation of the sources of the production of raw materials and food, or through the monopoly of demand in the foreign markets. The humiliating conditions under which they have received "foreign aid" have always facilitated the penetration of foreign products and capital. Exactly one century after Argentina achieved its "independence," Lenin was able to describe that country as a British semi-colony, and he warned that "finance capital is such a great, it may be said, such a decisive force in all economic and international relations, that it is capable of subordinating to itself, and actually does subordinate to itself, even states enjoying complete political independence." Subsequently this Latin American nation, perhaps the most fortunate in its relations with imperialism, passed through a rather intense process of industrialization and accelerated urbanization: Buenos Aires is one of the largest and most attractive capitals in the world. But this does not keep Argentina from being today a U.S. semi-colony, at least in regard to its oppressive financial dependency on Washington and the omnipotence that direct investments by U.S. corporations enjoy in its internal market.

The threads that make up the dense web of imperialist power have multiplied and become more subtle. It is not by chance that the world-wide process of capitalist integration under the hegemony of the United States, a process filled with tension and conflict, has coincided with the irreversible decline of the old colonial powers and their methods of control. The

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eminent Brazilian anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro described the new situation in America as follows:

> Hegel, in his classic study on the philosophy of history, foresaw the war between the Latin and Anglo-Saxon peoples of the Americas. This war is already taking place. However, instead of troop movements and pitched battles, it is being waged by conspiracies, bribery, contracts, intimidation, coups, programs of sociological studies, economic plans, and publicity campaigns. Through these means of pressure and compulsion, the United States is implementing, extending, and strengthening its own plan for exploiting our resources, organizing our societies, regulating our political life, determining the size of our population, and determining our destiny.[2]

The Investments Change Their Direction

The First World War was followed by the well-known withdrawal of European interests from certain underdeveloped areas of the world. In Latin America, due to obvious geopolitical reasons, the devastating advance of U.S. imperialism took place before and with greater speed than it did in other regions; already by the end of the nineteenth century the Caribbean was the *Mare Nostrum* of the United States. When Lenin wrote his book on imperialism, however, U.S. capital still represented less than a fifth of all private, direct, foreign investment in Latin America; today it represents close to three fourths. What concerns us most here is to point out that after the Second World War there was an important change in the direction of these investments. The tendency is clear. Capital invested in public services and mining has been losing its relative importance, while the proportion invested in petroleum and, above all, in manufacturing industries is increasing. Forty years ago U.S. investments in manufacturing represented only 6 percent of the total value of U.S. capital in Latin America; in 1960 the proportion had come close to 20 percent; and at present almost a third of total U.S. investments is in manufacturing.

The three largest countries in Latin America—Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico—are the ones that offer the most attractive markets for foreign industrial capital. The Organization of American States (OAS), the United States' traditional "Ministry of Colonies," describes the process as follows:

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Latin American enterprises are beginning to achieve superiority over already established industries and technologies of lesser sophistication, and private North American investments and probably also investments from other industrialized countries are rapidly increasing their participation in certain dynamic industries that require a relatively high degree of technology and are more important in determining the course of economic development.[3]

The penetration has been successful; the potential of U.S. factories located south of the Rio Grande is much greater than that of Latin American-owned industry in general. It can be seen from data released by the U.S. Department of Commerce and the Inter-American Committee of the Alliance for Progress that, based on an index of 1961 = 100, industrial production in Argentina rose to 112.5 in 1965, while during the same period sales by U.S. subsidiaries in Argentina rose to 166.3. The respective figures for Brazil are 109.2 and 120; and for Mexico, 142.2 and 186.8.

Of the fifty largest Argentinian businesses (those with a sales volume in excess of 7 billion pesos annually), half of the sales volume originates in foreign businesses, a third in state enterprises, and only a sixth in private Argentinian businesses.[4] In 1962, two enterprises operating with private Argentinian capital ranked among the five largest industrial enterprises in Latin America; by 1967 both of them had been taken over by foreign capital.[5] A study carried out by the Institute of Social Sciences of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and published in 1965 revealed that of the fifty-five multi-billionaire private groups in the Brazilian economy, twenty-nine were foreign, twenty-four Brazilian, and two of mixed foreign and Brazilian capital; of the Brazilian groups, only nine had no links through stockholders with foreign groups or enterprises. A subsequent study by the Brazilian Congress provided new data which spoke eloquently of the denationalization process that is proceeding at breakneck speed in that country's industry.[6] A minister of the Brazilian government said publicly in 1969 that "with a few honorable exceptions, the only strong sector in Brazil, besides the government itself, is foreign capital."[7] His statement is valid not only for Brazil. According to figures published in 1962, fifty-six of the hundred most important enterprises in

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Mexico are totally or partially controlled by foreign capital, twenty-four belong to the state, and twenty to Mexican private capital.[8] These twenty private Mexican concerns account for barely 13.5 percent of the total sales volume of the one hundred enterprises under consideration.

Except in the case of petroleum and some public services —activities in which the state clearly predominates in Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico—almost all of the other enterprises included in the above-mentioned studies are manufacturing industries, and it is precisely in this sector that foreign capital is most prominent. If this is the situation in the strongest countries in Latin America, it would be redundant to offer examples of foreign penetration of the few industries in the weaker countries. By far the largest part of these investments in manufacturing belongs to U.S. corporations, although there are European enterprises with quite considerable interests in Latin America. For example, Volkswagen do Brasil, the largest manufacturer of automobiles in Latin America, is a German concern.

The interest of imperialist corporations in appropriating the fruits of Latin American industrial growth for themselves and capitalizing it for their benefit does not imply, certainly, a lack of interest on their part in all the other traditional forms of exploitation. It is true that the railway which used to belong to United Fruit in Guatemala was no longer profitable and that Electric Bond and Share and the International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation made a splendid profit when their properties were nationalized in Brazil and they were paid indemnities in gold for outmoded installations. But this abandonment of public services in search of more lucrative activities does not occur in the case of many raw materials and foodstuffs. While a relative decline has been registered in the total volume of new investments in minerals, the U.S. economy cannot do without the supply of vital materials coming from the southern part of the hemisphere. In *The Age of Imperialism,* Harry Magdoff has shown that the United States' need for iron, copper, and a long list of strategic materials is steadily increasing; the proportion of imports is growing as the internal production of the United States declines. This is also the case with petroleum. After all, the splendid iron deposits in the Brazilian valley of

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Paraopeba caused the fall of two Presidents before the deposits were graciously ceded to the Hanna Mining Company; copper certainly has something to do with the disproportionate amount of military aid that Chile receives from the Pentagon; bauxite was certainly a factor in the conspiracy to overthrow Cheddi Jagan in Guyana; Cuban nickel explains the blind fury of the Empire even better than sugar; while the largest U.S. military mission in Latin America is located in Venezuela, the great oil preserve of Standard Oil and Gulf.

But all of this should not keep us from emphasizing the importance of this new phenomenon, which has occurred long after Lenin's period: the capture of markets *from within.* The affiliates of U.S. and European corporations jump at a single leap over Latin American tariff barriers, paradoxically erected against foreign competition, and seize control of the internal processes of industrialization. They export factories or, frequently, take control of and devour the already existing national factories. For this they can count on the enthusiastic aid of the majority of the governments of Latin America.

Under the Sign of Progress?

"The export of capital," wrote Lenin, "greatly affects and accelerates the development of capitalism in those countries to which it is exported." Historical experience has demonstrated that this is not so. The imperialism that Lenin knew—the greed of industrial centers in the search for world markets for their excess production and the capture of all the possible sources of raw materials; the extraction of iron, coal, and oil; the railways cementing their control of the areas under exploitation; the usurious loans made by the financial monopolies; the military expeditions and the wars of conquest—certainly did not accelerate anything except "the development of underdevelopment," as Andre Gunder Frank expresses it so well. Contrary to Midas, imperialism has turned everything it touched into scrap. But now some are tempted to deny this, basing themselves on the supposedly different situation that exists today. It is possible that Lenin was mistaken when he attributed an accelerated effect on development to the "old model" of imperialist exploitation, they argue, but this is not the case with the

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"new model." There is no lack of technocrats today prepared to demonstrate that foreign capital, in its new positive guise, benefits the areas it penetrates. To the degree that the model of exploitation has changed, they tell us, its consequences have also changed. Previously, imperialism razed the places where a colony or a semi-colony might have dared to erect its own factories, but now the rich countries stimulate the industrialization of the poor nations. This "industrializing imperialism" of our day, they maintain, contrary to the imperialism of past times, has an inevitable civilizing effect on a universal scale. Now guilty consciences no longer need alibis, since they are no longer guilty; modern imperialism radiates technology and progress, and it is even in bad taste to use that hateful word to describe it.

What actually are the effects of the increasing shift of foreign investment toward manufacturing industries in Latin America?

In the first place, it is necessary to note that this process of industrial denationalization has not required a large influx of capital. After all, direct investments of U.S. origin in 1966 in Argentinian, Brazilian, and Mexican industry, so important for the virtual monopolization of "key" manufacturing industries, were barely 3, 3.8, and 3.6 percent respectively, of the total amount of U.S. capital invested on a world-wide basis. And it must be noted that even those investment figures are inflated. In effect, since the rapidity with which technology is advancing is shortening at an ever increasing rate the length of time needed for the amortization of fixed capital in the advanced economies, the vast majority of the manufacturing installations and equipment exported to Latin America has already passed through a complete productive life cycle in its country of origin and has been completely or partially amortized before it is exported. This "detail" is not considered for the purposes of calculating the amount of foreign investment—the value placed on the machinery is fixed at an arbitrarily high level and would not be even remotely so expensive if the frequent cases of prior depreciation were taken into account. But why should the parent company incur expenses to produce in Latin America goods which were previously sold there after being manufactured in

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the home country? The Latin American governments themselves make sure that the foreign companies do not incur these expenses, by extending aid to the affiliates that are being installed, they say, to redeem the Latin American countries from their condition of underdevelopment. The affiliates have access to local credit from the moment they first post a sign on the land where the factory is to be built; they can count on foreign exchange privileges for their imports—imports which the companies usually purchase from themselves—and in some cases (such as Brazil) they can even count on special exchange rates for the payment of their foreign debts, which frequently are debts that they owe to the financial branch of the same corporation. The affiliates are also exempted from numerous taxes over long periods of time, and it is even common for them to receive guarantees against the risk of expropriation and monetary devaluation. They finance their subsequent expansion by reinvestment of part of their juicy profits and, above all, by means of the credit they receive in the country where they are operating. According to the OAS, an unimpeachable source in this respect, barely twenty cents of every dollar that U.S. industrial affiliates use for their operations and expansion come from the United States. The remaining eighty cents come from Latin American sources, through credits, loans, and the retention of profits. U.S. affiliates employ Latin American capital almost exclusively to finance their various operating needs.[9] This channeling of national resources into foreign enterprises is due in large part to the proliferation of U.S. bank branches spread throughout Latin America in order to pour national savings into foreign hands. There were 78 branches of U.S. banks in the area in 1964; in 1967, the number had risen to 133.[10] The Bank of New York acknowledges publicly that the most important among its new goals in Latin America is the capture of domestic savings for the benefit of the multinational corporations, so as to meet their production and sales needs.[11] It is worthy of note that the number of national banks which, without a change of name, are coming under foreign banking control is growing. Even those Latin American banks which have not been infiltrated or captured find it highly convenient to satisfy the credit requests of foreign affiliates, which are solidly

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backed and have a very considerable sales volume. The mobilization of local resources does not have, of course, the slightest effect on the capital structure of these enterprises. In general, 99 percent of the affiliates' stock is controlled by the parent corporation.[12]

A form of foreign penetration which does not require any investment at all is becoming increasingly common in Latin America. Even the OAS itself recognizes in the above-cited document that the development of U.S. companies in Latin America is due to a great degree to "the acquisition of Latin American industrial enterprises by U.S. interests, a phenomenon that has been observed over the last few years." Every method of financial coercion is employed for this purpose, including dumping, financial blackmail, and the infinite possibilities for exerting financial pressure provided by an overwhelming technological superiority. The old mechanism by means of which the creditor acquires the debtor's property, for example, is employed on a large scale. Debts acquired through the purchase of supplies, the use of patents and trademarks, etc., complicated by monetary devaluations that force the national enterprise to pay more pesos for the same amount of dollars, frequently lead to bankruptcy. Since the end of the 1950s, economic recessions, monetary instability, tighter credit, and the drop in the buying power of the internal market have all facilitated the task of bringing national enterprises to their knees before the large foreign corporations. Besides, since the affiliates of these corporations are no more than cogs in a world-wide system, they can afford the luxury of losing money for a year or two or indeed for whatever time is necessary. Consequently, they lower their prices and wait for their victim's demise. The siege begins. The banks collaborate, and the national enterprise is found not to be as solvent as it seemed—it is therefore denied assistance. The national enterprise, completely surrounded, soon raises the white flag. Both sides then merrily celebrate the surrender. The Latin American "national bourgeoisie," which was produced by the old agricultural exporting system, rediscovers its destiny—the local capitalist becomes either a junior partner or a functionary of his conquerors. Or he gains the most coveted prize of all: he receives the ransom of

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his goods in stocks in the foreign parent corporation and ends his days living the soft life of a shareholder.

The great corporations, then, do not need to bring many dollars along with them. Quite to the contrary, they take them out of the country. "Under modern capitalism, when monopolies prevail, the export of *capital* has become the typical feature," wrote Lenin. In our days, as Baran and Sweezy have pointed out, imperialism imports capital from the countries where it operates. In the 1950-1967 period, new U.S. investments in Latin America totaled, without including profits which were reinvested, $3,921 million. In the same period, $12,819 million were repatriated by those enterprises in profits and dividends. The earnings which have been drained off are more than three times as much as the total amount of new capital invested in Latin America. But this is a conservative estimate. A good part of the money which was sent back to the U.S. as amortization was really profits, and the figures also do not include payments abroad for patents, royalties, and technical assistance; nor do they reveal other invisible transfers that usually appear under the heading "errors and omissions"; nor do they take into account the profits that the corporations receive when they inflate the prices of supplies sold to their affiliates and when they inflate, with equal enthusiasm, their operating costs. The negative flow of capital reflects increasingly greater profits, above all in the most underdeveloped areas: Latin America, Africa, and, to an even greater degree, Asia.

The profound structural deformations in the Latin American economy, which can be seen everywhere and at all times, like a bone laid bare by a wound, are also reflected in the simple and terrible fact that half of all investments in Latin America are of an unproductive nature.[13] The "internationalization" of the industrial process has only increased this waste, allowing the economic surplus produced in the region to be drained off by foreign interests. It is becoming more and more evident that the bread of the oppressive minorities in Latin America is the poison of the oppressed majorities; south of the Rio Grande private interests coincide less and less with public interests. Foreign investment in industry does not alter this picture of things; it only confirms it in a dramatic fashion.

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When they remove more dollars than they bring, the foreign enterprises help increase the growing deficit in the balance of payments; *the region that is "benefited" is decapitalized instead of capitalized. The loan mechanism then begins to function.* And it is important to observe that the international credit organizations play a very important role in dismantling the defensive citadels of Latin American industry. Lenin rightly emphasized the fact that the export of finance capital is, for the imperialist countries, a means of stimulating the export of goods. In this sense, the conditions attached to loans made by the Alliance for Progress, "tied" to the purchase of goods and services in the United States, are instructive. This holds true to such an extent that the portion of *real* aid in official U.S. financial assistance to Latin America is less than half the amount of *nominal* aid, again according to unimpeachable sources,[14] as a result of the conditions under which it is given. The changes announced by President Nixon do not significantly alter the situation. But it is still more important to note the importance of international credit in "clearing the way" for direct investments by the large corporations. "The characteristic feature of imperialism," wrote Lenin, "is *not* industrial capital, *but* finance capital." The evolution of capitalism since then implies an evolution of imperialism. In the last half century changes have taken place within the capitalist system; in the United States banks no longer control industrial corporations, but are instead integral parts of the same system.[15] And just as the multinational corporations are multinational because they operate in the four corners of the capitalist globe, while their property is in no way international, so the international monetary organizations are in no way at the service of the numerous countries that provide the capital with which they operate, but instead fulfill the designs of the great integrating power of world capitalism—the United States. The death of the system based on the gold standard, which signaled the definitive decline of the British Empire, enormously increased the international supply of finance capital and made possible the appearance of organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and, on the regional level, the Inter-American Development Bank, which reserve for themselves the right of

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governing the Third World and of determining the course to be followed by the countries that benefit from the credit they extend. The presence of the marines is becoming less and less necessary; the international technocrats disembark instead (tears flow, not blood) and mount assaults on the central banks and the key ministries of the poor nations.

With its direct investments, imperialism bleeds dependent economies. With its loans, it administers the drug necessary to keep them on their feet and takes control, in an increasingly arrogant way, of the internal power structure. Imperialism first makes its subject ill, and then it constructs the hospital in which the patient lies imprisoned and without any possibility of being cured. Latin America is now living through what economists call the "debt explosion." It is a vicious circle of strangulation: loans and investments increase, and as a result the payments of amortizations, interests, dividends, and other services also increase. In order to make these payments, new injections of foreign capital that generate greater obligations are needed, and so on successively. According to the World Bank, payments for services in 1980 will completely cancel out the influx of foreign capital to the underdeveloped world. In the decade 1956-1965, Latin America's public foreign debt climbed from $4 billion to close to $11 billion. In 1965, the influx of credit was already less than the capital leaving the region to meet commitments previously contracted.

The World Bank, the Alliance for Progress, and U.S. private banks make their loans contingent on approval by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The IMF uses the magic phrase "monetary stabilization" to impose on Latin America the policies of liberalization of trade, tightening internal credit, freezing wages, discouraging state activities, and monetary devaluations that are theoretically intended to stimulate exports but that in fact only stimulate the internal concentration of capital in the hands of the large landowners, the bankers, and the big speculators. This is a policy intended to destroy national defenses against the omnipotent penetration of foreign private capital. *The terrain is prepared in advance for the conquerors.*

All these imperialist organizations for international philanthropy insist on the struggle against internal and external im-

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balances in the Latin American economy. Their prescriptions correspond to the diagnosis. We cannot, given the brevity of this study, demonstrate the many ways by which the policy imposed by them aggravates those imbalances instead of lessening them. What interests us here is simply to observe the effect that imperialist investments in the field of industry have on one of the most important factors in Latin American economic imbalance—foreign trade. The "trade gap" is becoming wider and wider because the need to import products is growing steadily in relation to the financial resources generated by exports. Only a tenth of Latin American exports are provided by manufactured products. The region depends on sales of unprocessed or hardly processed primary products that have very unstable prices on international markets controlled by the rich countries and their powerful corporations. Latin American exports grow in volume but their prices tend to fall—or, in the best of cases, they remain stagnant—while the prices of industrialized products imported by the region rise. Buying power is diminishing. Taking 1950 prices as a base and adding data from various documents published by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the UN itself, it can be seen that Latin America lost, due to the deterioration of its terms of trade, more than $18.5 billion in the ten years from 1955 to 1964. Now then, *imperialist investments in the industrial sector have had absolutely no effect on these terms of international trade. Latin America continues to exchange its primary products for specialized articles produced in the metropolitan economies.* The importance of "traditional" exports is actually growing within the total picture rather than diminishing, and the proportion of foreign sales by foreign affiliates is steadily decreasing within the total volume of sales.

The head of a U.S. technical mission to Brazil, John Abbink, announced prophetically in 1950: "The United States must be prepared to 'guide' the inevitable industrialization of underdeveloped countries if it wants to avoid the blow of very intense economic development outside of U.S. influence. . . . Industrialization, if it is not controlled in some way, will lead to a substantial reduction in U.S. export markets."[16] There was absolutely no reduction in the Latin American market for U.S.

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goods. One of the paradoxes of industrialization to *reduce* imports is that it forces an *increase* in imports. Certain goods that previously were imported are produced internally, but such internal production generates a "derivative" demand for intermediate products and capital goods, the magnitude of which goes far beyond the original saving in foreign currency. The United States now sells Latin America a greater proportion of more sophisticated products requiring a higher level of technology. "In the long run," says the U.S. Department of Commerce, "as Mexican industrial production increases, there are greater opportunities for additional exports from the United States. . . ."[17] The affiliates of great corporations have leaped the tariff barriers to supply Latin American markets from within, and they obtain additional benefits to the degree that they make purchases abroad, buying materials from their parent corporations or from other affiliates at prices set deliberately high.

This imperialism that even exports entire factories corresponds to the highest stage in the development of monopoly capitalism. In Lenin's time, free competition was already a museum piece. Today the corporations comfortably enjoy the control of prices in the countries where they operate. In Latin America they protect themselves behind a Chinese Wall of protective tariffs to produce, at prices two or three times higher, products that they used to export to our countries from abroad. Investments are low, manpower is as abundant as it is cheap, and the state subsidizes the financing of installment buying. Nevertheless, everything is more expensive. Control over the market is facilitated by the complete freedom which these enterprises enjoy, by the magic prestige of U.S. trademarks and advertising slogans in English, benefiting from an unparalleled and effective international publicity campaign, and from the fact that foreign industrial investments control the "modern sector" of the dependent economies which, by its own dynamics, subordinates all the other sectors to it.

The internal markets, then, provide juicy profits, even though the significant consumers in Latin America represent only a very small part of the total population. Barely one out of every four Brazilians can be considered a real consumer. The

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population is growing at a dizzy rate, and yet the development of dependent capitalism—a voyage with more disasters than survivors—leaves more people on the margin of the economy than it integrates into it. In the majority of Latin American markets there is only an elite with buying power. Foreign industry is aimed, above all, at that elite, and it does not show the slightest interest in expanding the consumption of the masses beyond a certain limit. The market could only be expanded both horizontally and vertically if profound changes were made in the entire socio-economic structure. Fernando Henrique Cardoso has noted[18] that national capital in Argentina and Brazil is strongest in the "traditional" industrial sectors, those with a low technological level which depend to the greatest degree on a mass market, while the foreign affiliates or the national capitalists subjected to "structural dependency" only "require the strengthening of economic links between the islands of development in the dependent countries and the international economic system, and subordinate internal changes to this primary objective."

The studies that have been carried out concerning the need for agrarian reform are very instructive in this regard, above all if one takes into account the fact that the agrarian question is the main bottleneck in Latin American development. In Argentina as well as in Brazil, "the managerial sector shows a marked tendency to oppose agrarian reform,"[19] and the studies that have been made show clearly that the more dependent the managerial sector is on the "international mode of production," the sharper is its opposition to changes in the agrarian structure. The industrially less complex sectors are the ones that favor drastic broadening of the market. The most complex sectors, when they represent national capital, are usually bound to foreign interests by their technological or financial dependency, and the payment on account of patents, profits, interest, royalties, stock dividends, or "know-how" is accompanied by an attitude of resistance to possible structural changes. There is a direct relationship between the manager's degree of dependency and his political panic when there is the slightest possibility of change in the power structure from which he benefits. The *latifundium* continues untouched—it is his ally.

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The continued existence of the rural *latifundium* generates a constant and growing flow of workers moving from the countryside to the cities, but the factories do not provide employment for the surplus workers. On the contrary, industrial productivity is increasing in the face of ever-diminishing job opportunities—and Latin America has the highest demographic growth rate in the world. The "internationalized" industrialization has an exclusive character; the enterprises bring a technology along with them to save on manpower in countries where manpower has no employment. *The proportion of workers in manufacturing industry is diminishing in relation to the total active population in Latin America.* Factory workers represented 14.5 percent in the decade of the fifties, but only 11.6 percent in the decade of the sixties.[20] A fourth of the active population is currently unemployed or underemployed; in the large cities a growing multitude is crammed into the *favelas,* the *villas miserias,* the *ranchos,* the *cantegriles,* and the *callampas,* broad belts of poverty around the wealth of the urban centers. The system vomits forth men, but industry gives itself the luxury of sacrificing manpower to an even greater degree than European industry does.[21] In contrast to the "classical" models of capitalist development, there is no coherent relationship between available manpower and applied technology. Rich lands, vast underground wealth, and very poor people—that is the panorama presented by this realm of abundance and need. Great numbers of workers are abandoned by the roadside by the system which condemns them to a marginal existence and frustrates the development of the internal market and lowers the wage level. The eruption of the urban bourgeoisie onto the stage of history has not provoked, in contrast to Europe and the United States, any agrarian revolution; dependent industrialization functions on the structure just as it is. It is true that "poles" are developing around which the production and wealth of each country are being concentrated, but they do not share the benefits of their growth. They are oases of prosperity in the desert, the shining cities that feign their existence amid the desolate landscape of widespread poverty. The new type of foreign capital, which raises smokestacks in underdeveloped areas, is concentrated around these poles in such a way that it not only

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sharpens social contradictions by segregating the labor force and polarizing wealth still further, but also sharpens regional contradictions within the borders of each country and within the overall limits of Latin America. The efforts that are being made to form a Latin American Common Market reflect, in this sense, the desire to lay the basis for a new division of labor that would benefit the most developed urban centers, thus broadening the markets for the denationalized industry, while leaving intact the structure each country must endure.

The native Latin American bourgeoisie, a bourgeoisie of merchants without creative spirit, connected by its umbilical cord to the power of the land, is on its knees before the altar of the goddess technology. It is in the name of technological progress that national enterprises pass into the hands of foreign interests, sometimes in the most direct and brutal fashion and at other times through the consolidation of multiple hidden forms of dependency. Raúl Prebisch himself warns that "U.S. enterprises in Europe install laboratories and engage in research that helps strengthen the scientific and technical capacity of those countries, something which has not occurred in Latin America." And he reveals a very serious fact. "National investors," he says, "due to their lack of specialized knowledge (know-how), carry out most of their transfer of technology by receiving techniques *that belong to the public domain and that are imported as though they were licenses of specialized knowledge. . . .*"[22] This "national" bourgeoisie with its clipped wings is defeated in advance. The great multinational corporations, which stand at the controls of technological progress, obviously also hold the keys to the Latin American economy. The transfer of power to foreign interests is, when things are seen in their proper perspective, much more serious than the statistics indicate. It is also necessary to keep in mind that the large imperialist investments in the most dynamic sectors of the Latin American economy provide those corporations with limitless power to manipulate the consumer market, which is increasingly attracted by U.S. advertising, to channel national savings and the economic surplus produced by our countries, to use advertising and the various other ways of creating public opinion, and,

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also, to exert that political pressure required by imperialism's digestive needs.

The new type of imperialism does not make its colonies more prosperous, even though it enriches its "enclaves"; it does not alleviate social tensions, but on the contrary sharpens them; it extends poverty and concentrates wealth; it takes over the internal market and the key parts of the productive apparatus; it appropriates progress for itself, determines its direction, and fixes its limits; it absorbs credit and directs foreign trade as it pleases; it does not provide capital for development, but instead removes it; it encourages waste by sending the greatest part of the economic surplus abroad; it denationalizes our industry and also the profits that our industry produces. Today in Latin America the system has our veins as open as it did in those distant times when our blood first served the needs of primary accumulation for European capitalist development.

(*Translated by William Rose*)

Notes

1. Richard M. Nixon, speech to the OAS, April 14, 1969. Of course, it is also necessary to take into account the rate at which the gap separating the poor from the rich widens *within* Latin American countries—per capita income is a deceptive average.
2. Darcy Ribeiro, "El dilema latinoamericano," unpublished.
3. General Secretariat of the OAS, *El financiamiento externo para el desarrollo de la América Latina* (Washington, 1969). A document of limited distribution presented to the sixth annual meeting of the Inter-American Economic and Social Council.
4. Quoted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America, (*Estudio Económico de América Latina,* 1968).
5. Rogelio García Lupo, *Contra la ocupación extranjera* (Buenos Aires, 1968).
6. See Eduardo Galeano, "The De-nationalization of Brazilian Industry," *Monthly Review,* December 1969.
7. Speech by Minister Hélio Beltrão before the Commercial Association of Rio de Janeiro, *Correio do Povo,* May 24, 1969.
8. José Luis Ceceña, *Los monopolios en México* (Mexico, 1962).
9. OAS, *op. cit.*
10. International Banking Survey, *Journal of Commerce,* New York, February 25, 1968.
11. Robert A. Bennett and Karen Almonti, *International Activities of United States Banks* (New York, 1969).
12. Celso Furtado, *La economía latinoamericana desde la Conquista Ibérica hasta la Revolución Cubana,* (Santiago de Chile, 1969).

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13. Aldo Ferrer, "Distribución del ingreso y desarrollo económico," *El trimestre económico,* Mexico, April-June 1954.
14. OAS, *op. cit.*
15. Paul Baran and Paul M. Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital* (New York, 1966).
16. *Jornal do Comercio,* March 23, 1950.
17. *International Commerce,* a U.S. Department of Commerce weekly, April 24, 1967.
18. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, "Política e desenvolvimento em sociedades dependentes: ideologias do empresariado industrial argentino e brasileiro," unpublished thesis, São Paulo, 1968.
19. *Ibid.*
20. United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America, *op. cit.*
21. OAS, *op. cit.*
22. Raúl Prebisch, "La cooperación internacional en el desarrollo latinoamericano," *Desarrollo,* Bogota, no. 12, January, 1970. (Emphasis added.)

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Eric Hobsbawm

LENIN AND THE "ARISTOCRACY OF LABOR"

The following brief essay is a contribution to the discussion of Lenin's thought, on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of his birth. The subject is one which can be appropriately treated by a British Marxist, since the concept of an "aristocracy of labor" is one which Lenin clearly derived from the history of British nineteenth-century capitalism. His concrete references to the "aristocracy of labor" as a stratum of the working class appear to be exclusively drawn from Britain (though in his study notes on imperialism he also remarks upon similar phenomena in the "white" parts of the British Empire). The term itself is almost certainly derived from a passage by Engels written in 1885 and reprinted in the introduction to the 1892 edition of *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* which speaks of the great English trade unions as forming "an aristocracy among the working class."

The actual phrase may be attributable to Engels, but the concept was familiar in English politico-social debate, particularly in the 1880s. It was generally accepted that the working class in Britain at this period contained a favored stratum—a minority but a numerically large one—which was most usually identified with the "artisans" (i.e., the skilled employed craftsmen and workers) and more especially with those organized in trade unions or other working-class organizations. This is the sense in which foreign observers also used the term, e.g., Schulze-Gaevernitz, whom Lenin quotes with approval on this point in the celebrated eighth chapter of *Imperialism*. This conventional identification was not entirely valid, but, like the general use of the concept of an upper working-class stratum, reflected

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an evident social reality. Neither Marx nor Engels nor Lenin "invented" a labor aristocracy. It existed only too visibly in Britain of the second half of the nineteenth century. Moreover, if it existed anywhere else, it was clearly much less visible or significant. Lenin assumed that, until the period of imperialism, it existed nowhere else.

The novelty of Engels's argument lay elsewhere. He held that this aristocracy of labor was made possible by the industrial world monopoly of Britain, and would therefore disappear or be pushed closer to the rest of the proletariat with the ending of this monopoly. Lenin followed Engels on this point, and indeed in the years immediately preceding 1914, when the British labor movement was becoming radicalized, tended to stress the second half of Engels's argument, e.g., in his articles "English Debates on a Liberal Workers' Policy" (1912), "The British Labor Movement" (1912), and "In England, the Pitiful Results of Opportunism" (1913). While not doubting for a moment that the labor aristocracy was the basis of the opportunism and "Liberal-Laborism" of the British movement, Lenin did not appear as yet to emphasize the international implications of the argument. For instance, he apparently did not use it in his analysis of the social roots of revisionism (see "Marxism and Revisionism," 1908, and "Differences in the European Labor Movement," 1910). Here he argued rather that revisionism, like anarcho-syndicalism, was due to the constant creation on the margins of developing capitalism of certain middle strata—small workshops, domestic workers, etc.—which are in turn constantly cast into the ranks of the proletariat, so that petty-bourgeois tendencies inevitably infiltrate into proletarian parties.

The line of thought which he derived from his recognition of the labor aristocracy was at this stage somewhat different; and it is to be noted that he maintained it, in part at least, to the end of his political life. Here it is perhaps relevant to observe that Lenin drew his knowledge of the phenomenon not only from the writings of Marx and Engels, who commented frequently on the British labor movement, and from his personal acquaintance with Marxists in England (which he

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visited six times between 1902 and 1911), but also from the fullest and best-informed work on the "aristocratic" trade unions of the nineteenth century, Sidney and Beatrice Webb's *Industrial Democracy*. This important book he knew intimately, having translated it in his Siberian exile. It provided him, incidentally, with an immediate understanding of the links between the British Fabians and Bernstein: "The original source of a number of Bernstein's contentions and ideas," he wrote in September 1899 to a correspondent, "is in the latest books written by the Webbs." Lenin continued to quote information drawn from the Webbs many years later, and specifically refers to *Industrial Democracy* in the course of his argument in *What Is To Be Done?*

Two propositions may be derived in part, or mainly, from the experience of the British labor aristocracy. The first was "that the subservience to the spontaneity of the labor movement, belittling of the role of 'the conscious element,' of the role of Social Democracy, *means, whether one likes it or not, the growth of influence of bourgeois ideology among the workers.*" The second was that a purely trade unionist struggle "is necessarily a struggle according to trade, because conditions of labor differ very much in different trades, and consequently the fight to *improve* these conditions can only be conducted in respect to each trade." (*What Is To Be Done?* The second argument is supported by direct reference to the Webbs.)

The first of these propositions appears to be based on the view that, under capitalism, bourgeois ideology is hegemonic, unless deliberately counteracted by "the conscious element." This important observation leads us far beyond the mere question of the labor aristocracy, and we need not pursue it further here. The second proposition is more closely linked to the aristocracy of labor. It argues that, given the "law of uneven development" within capitalism—i.e., the diversity of conditions in different industries, regions, etc., of the same economy—a purely "economist" labor movement must tend to fragment the working class into "selfish" ("petty bourgeois") segments each pursuing its interest, if necessary in alliance with its own

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employers, at the expense of the rest. (Lenin several times quoted the case of the "Birmingham Alliances" of the 1890s, attempts at a joint union-management bloc to maintain prices in various metal trades. He derived this information almost certainly also from the Webbs.) Consequently such a purely "economist" movement must tend to disrupt the unity and political consciousness of the proletariat and to weaken or counteract its revolutionary role.

This argument is also very general. We can regard the aristocracy of labor as a special case of this general model. It arises when the economic circumstances of capitalism make it possible to grant significant concessions to the proletariat, within which certain strata manage, by means of their special scarcity, skill, strategic position, organizational strength, etc., to establish notably better conditions for themselves than the rest. Hence there may be historic situations, as in late nineteenth-century England, when the aristocracy of labor can almost be identified with the effective trade union movement, as Lenin sometimes came close to suggesting.

But if the argument is in principle more general, there can be no doubt that what was in Lenin's mind when he used it was the aristocracy of labor. Time and again we find him using phrases such as the following: "the petty bourgeois craft spirit which prevails among this aristocracy of labor" ("The Session of the International Socialist Bureau," 1908); "the English trade unions, insular, aristocratic, philistinely selfish"; "the English pride themselves on their 'practicalness' and their dislike of general principles; this is an expression of the craft spirit in the labor movement" ("English Debates on a Liberal Workers' Policy," 1912); and "this aristocracy of labor . . . isolated itself from the mass of the proletariat in close, selfish, craft unions" ("Harry Quelch," 1913). Moreover, much later, and in a carefully considered programmatic statement—in fact, in his "Preliminary Draft Theses on the Agrarian Question for the Second Congress of the Communist International" (1920)—the connection is made with the greatest clarity:

> The industrial workers cannot fulfill their world-historical mission of emancipating mankind from the yoke of capital and from wars if these workers concern themselves exclusively with

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their narrow craft, narrow trade interests, and smugly confine themselves to care and concern for improving their own, sometimes tolerable, petty bourgeois conditions. This is exactly what happens in many advanced countries to the "labor aristocracy" which serves as the base of the alleged Socialist parties of the Second International.

This quotation, combining the earlier and the later ideas of Lenin about the aristocracy of labor, leads us naturally from the one to the other. These later writings are familiar to all Marxists. They date in the main from the period 1914-1917, and form part of Lenin's attempt to provide a coherent Marxist explanation for the outbreak of the war and especially the simultaneous and traumatic collapse of the Second International and most of its constituent parties. They are stated most fully in the eighth chapter of *Imperialism,* and the article "Imperialism and the Split in the Socialist Movement," written a little later (autumn 1916) and complementing it.

The argument of *Imperialism* is well-known, though the glosses of "Imperialism and the Split" are not so widely known. Broadly speaking, it runs as follows. Thanks to the peculiar position of British capitalism—"vast colonial possessions and a monopolist position in the world markets"—the British working class tended already in the mid-nineteenth century to be divided into a favored minority of labor aristocrats and a much larger lower stratum. The upper stratum "becomes bourgeois," while at the same time "a section of the proletariat allows itself to be led by people who are bought by the bourgeoisie, or at least are in their pay." In the epoch of imperialism what was once a purely British phenomenon is now found in all the imperialist powers. Hence opportunism, degenerating into social chauvinism, characterized all the leading parties of the Second International. However, "opportunism cannot now triumph in the working-class movement of any country for decades as it did in England," because world monopoly has now to be shared between a number of competing countries. Thus imperialism, while generalizing the phenomenon of the aristocracy of labor, also provides the conditions for its disappearance.

The relatively cursory passages of *Imperialism* are expanded into a rather fuller argument in "Imperialism and the Split."

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The existence of a labor aristocracy is explained by the superprofits of monopoly, which allows the capitalists "to devote a part (and not a small one at that!) to bribe *their own workers,* to create something like an alliance . . . between the workers of a given nation and their capitalists *against* the other countries." This "bribery" operates through trusts, the financial oligarchy, high prices, etc. (i.e., something like joint monopolies between a given capitalism and its workers). The amount of the potential bribe is substantial—Lenin estimated it as perhaps one hundred million francs out of a billion—and so, under certain circumstances, is the stratum which benefits from it. However, "the question as to how this little sop is distributed among labor ministers, 'labor representatives' . . . labor members of war industrial committees, labor officials, workers organized in narrow craft unions, office employees, etc., etc., is a secondary question." The remainder of the argument, with exceptions to be noted below, amplifies but does not substantially alter the argument of *Imperialism.*

It is essential to recall that Lenin's analysis was attempting to explain a specific historic situation—the collapse of the Second International—and to buttress specific political conclusions which he drew from it. He argued, first, that since opportunism and social chauvinism represented only a minority of the proletariat, revolutionaries must "go down *lower* and *deeper,* to the real masses"; and second, that the "bourgeois labor parties" were now irrevocably sold to the bourgeoisie, and would neither disappear before the revolution nor in some way "return" to the revolutionary proletariat, though they might "swear by the name of Marx" wherever Marxism was popular among the workers. Hence revolutionaries must reject a factitious unity between the revolutionary proletarian and the opportunist philistine trend within the labor movement. In brief, the international movement had to be split, so that a Communist labor movement could replace a Social Democratic one.

These conclusions applied to a specific historical situation, but the analysis supporting them was more general. Since it was part of a specific political polemic as well as a broader analysis, some of the ambiguities of Lenin's argument about

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imperialism and the labor aristocracy are not to be scrutinized too closely. As we have seen, he himself pushed certain aspects of it aside as "secondary." Nevertheless, the argument is in certain respects unclear or ambiguous. Most of its difficulties arise out of Lenin's insistence that the corrupted sector of the working class is and can only be a minority, or even, as he sometimes suggests polemically, a tiny minority, as against the masses who are not "infected with 'bourgeois respectability' " and to whom the Marxists must appeal, for "this is the essence of Marxian tactics."

In the first place, it is evident that the corrupted minority could be, even on Lenin's assumptions, a numerically large sector of the working class and an even larger one of the organized labor movement. Even if it only amounted to 20 percent of the proletariat, like the labor organizations in late nineteenth-century England or in 1914 Germany (the illustration is Lenin's), it could not be simply written off politically, and Lenin was too realistic to do so. Hence a certain hesitation in his formulations. It was not the labor aristocracy as such, but only "a stratum" of it which had deserted economically to the bourgeoisie ("Imperialism and the Split"). It is not clear which stratum. The only types of workers specifically mentioned are the functionaries, politicians, etc., of the reformist labor movements. These are indeed minorities—tiny minorities— corrupted and sometimes frankly sold to the bourgeoisie, but the question why they command the support of their followers is not discussed.

In the second place, the position of the mass of the workers is left in some ambiguity. It is clear that the mechanism of exploiting a monopoly of markets, which Lenin regards as the basis of "opportunism," functions in ways which cannot confine its benefits to one stratum only of the working class. There is good reason to suppose that the "something like an alliance" "between the workers of the given nation and their capitalists *against* the other countries" (and which Lenin illustrates by the Webbs' "Birmingham Alliances") implies some benefits for *all* workers, though obviously much larger ones for the well organized and strategically strong labor aristocrats among them. It is indeed true that the world monopoly of nineteenth-cen-

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tury British capitalism may have provided the lower proletarian strata with no significant benefits, while it provided the labor aristocracy with substantial ones. But this was because there was, under the conditions of competitive, liberal, "laissez-faire" capitalism and inflation, *no* mechanism other than the market (including the collective bargaining of the few proletarian groups capable of applying it), for distributing the benefits of world monopoly to the British workers.

But under the conditions of imperialism and monoply capitalism this was no longer so. Trusts, price maintenance, "alliances," etc., did provide a means of distributing concessions more generally to the workers affected. Moreover, the role of the state was changing, as Lenin was aware. "Lloyd Georgeism" (which he discussed most perceptively in "Imperialism and the Split") aimed at "securing fairly substantial sops for the obedient workers, in the shape of social reforms (insurance, etc.)." It is evident that such reforms were likely to benefit the "non-aristocratic" workers relatively more than the already comfortably situated "aristocrats."

Finally, Lenin's theory of imperialism argues that the "handful of the richest, privileged nations" turned into "parasites on the body of the rest of mankind," i.e., into collective exploiters, and suggests a division of the world into "exploiting" and "proletarian" nations. Could the benefits of such a collective exploitation be confined entirely to a privileged layer of the metropolitan proletariat? Lenin was keenly aware that the original Roman proletariat was a collectively parasitic class. Writing about the Stuttgart Congress of the International in 1907, he observed:

> The class of those who own nothing but do not labor either is incapable of overthrowing the exploiters. Only the proletarian class, which maintains the whole of society, has the power to bring about a successful social revolution. And now we see that, as the result of a far-reaching colonial policy the European proletariat has *partly* reached a situation where it is *not* its work that maintains the whole of society but that of the people of the colonies who are practically enslaved. . . . In certain countries these circumstances create the material and economic basis for infecting the proletariat of one country or another with colonial chauvinism. Of course this

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may perhaps be only a temporary phenomenon, but one must nevertheless clearly recognize the evil and understand its causes. . . .

"Marx frequently referred to a very significant saying of Sismondi's to the effect that the proletarians of the ancient world lived at the expense of society whereas modern society lives at the expense of the proletarian." (1907) Nine years later, in the context of a later discussion, "Imperialism and the Split" still recalls that "the Roman proletariat lived at the expense of society."

Lenin's analysis of the social roots of reformism is often presented as if it dealt *only* with the formation of a labor aristocracy. It is of course undeniable that Lenin stressed this aspect of his analysis far more than any other and, for purposes of political argument, almost to the exclusion of any other. It is also clear that he hesitated to follow up other parts of his analysis, which seemed to have no bearing on the political point he was at that time overwhelmingly concerned to make. However, a close reading of his writings shows that he did consider other aspects of the problem, and that he was aware of some of the difficulties of an excessively one-sided "labor aristocratic" approach. Today, when it is possible to separate what is of permanent relevance in Lenin's argument from what reflects the limits of his information or the requirements of a specific political situation, we are in a position to see his writings in historical perspective.

If we try to judge his work on the "aristocracy of labor" in such a perspective, we may well conclude that his writings of 1914-1916 are somewhat less satisfactory than the profound line of thought which he pursued consistently from *What Is To Be Done?* to the *Preliminary Draft Theses on the Agrarian Question* of 1920. In fact, though much of the analysis of a "labor aristocracy" is applicable to the period of imperialism, the classic nineteenth-century (British) model of it, which formed the basis of Lenin's thinking on the subject was ceasing to provide an adequate guide to the reformism of, at least, the British labor movement by 1914, though as a stratum of the working class it was probably at its peak in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

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On the other hand the more general argument about the dangers of "spontaneity" and "selfish" economism in the trade-union movement, though illustrated by the historic example of the late nineteenth-century British labor aristocracy, retains all its force. It is indeed one of the most fundamental and permanently illuminating contributions of Lenin to Marxism.

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Marcel Liebman

LENIN IN 1905: A REVOLUTION THAT SHOOK A DOCTRINE

The year 1905 saw the first encounter between Leninism and revolution. Until 1905 Lenin had been concerned with working out the theory and everyday practice of the instrument of the revolution—the vanguard Party. He had elaborated its structural requirements and operational methods. He had developed some of his most important concepts—the necessity of Party *centralization,* the *discipline* by which it must be ruled, and the role of the Party in guiding the masses and organizing them into *cadres* in order to counteract the defects of a spontaneity which he had forcefully stressed. Finally, Lenin had stressed, especially in *What Is to Be Done?,* the prime importance of a party of professional revolutionaries constituting, as it were, a political and military order capable of both struggling against police repression and providing a bulwark against opportunism. These ideas represented the first systematic and coherent conception of an *elitist Party* having the task of *directing* the activity of the proletariat.

The 1905 Revolution affords the first opportunity to observe the flexibility of Lenin's views, the pliability of his ideas, and the essential characteristic of his revolutionary genius: his ability to understand the meaning and ramifications of events, his grasp of the fresh possibilities which arise out of new facts and play sudden havoc with analyses—including his own—long taken for granted; and last but not least, his will and capacity to learn from the masses and successfully apply the lessons of their movement. That he could do this was due not to shrewd and somewhat cynical calculation on his part but to his pro-

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foundly revolutionary and democratic conviction that the people are the agents of their own liberation, and to the temperament of a militant who readily abandons the drabness of theory in order to commit himself fully to the struggles unleashed by the masses. Leninism is a doctrine, but it is also a pragmatic attitude oriented toward revolutionary action which deepens and invigorates the doctrine and prevents it from becoming rigid. This is evidenced by the manner in which Lenin reacted to the 1905 Revolution, and which in many respects foreshadows an attitude that made him, in 1917, the principal architect of the Bolshevik victory.

We will trace the evidence by examining the following: the conception and structures of the Bolshevik organization as they were transformed by the revolutionary events; Lenin's views regarding the nature of the Party, the role of the masses, and revolutionary strategy; and, finally, his attempts to get his own followers to accept his views.

1905 and the Bolshevik Organization

The January 1905 events took most Russian revolutionaries by surprise. The Bolsheviks in particular had not anticipated these events and reacted to them generally with misgivings, hesitations, and even some hostility. Although in the ensuing months popular agitation spread throughout the country, they did not readily alter their attitude. But the movement developed so rapidly, and its success, although short-lived, was so spectacular, that the events could not fail to leave a profound mark on Bolshevism. The Leninist organization shaped by the 1905 Revolution was different from its original form as elaborated by Lenin.

Lenin had presented the general principles underlying his organizational views not only in *What Is To Be Done?* and *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back,* but also in numerous articles, reports, and speeches. The *Letter to a Comrade on Our Organizational Tasks,* which dates from September 1902, is in many respects the most interesting of these documents. This letter does not contain mere generalities; it furnishes information that enables us to understand Lenin's concrete views of the

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revolutionary Party. In this letter he describes his conception of the relationship between the revolutionary organization and the mass of workers, and provides details concerning the structure and functions of the Party. The local committees, themselves subject to the leadership of the Central Committee, should direct "*all* aspects of the local movement," and consist of "fully conscious Social Democrats who devote themselves entirely to Social Democratic activities."[1]* The authority of these committees must extend even to a number of technical matters and to sections quite competent to deal with questions affecting their own localities, and their relations with the local leadership must be governed by the principle of centralization and by strict hierarchic subordination. In this connection Lenin emphasizes that "the elective principle and decentralization [are] . . . absolutely impermissible . . . and even altogether detrimental to revolutionary work carried on under an autocracy."[2] Finally, there are at the base "factory (mill) committees" consisting of "a very small number of *revolutionaries,* who take their instructions and receive their authority to carry on all Social Democratic work in the factory *directly from the committee.*" Lenin emphasizes that "every member of the factory committee should regard himself as an agent of the committee, obliged to submit to all its orders and to observe all the 'laws and customs' of the 'army in the field' which he has joined and from which in time of war he has no right to absent himself without official leave."[3] It is clear that this approach places great stress on the strict necessity for army-like discipline and on the almost unlimited prerogatives of committees whose composition reflects the predominance and even absolute hegemony of professional revolutionaries. In keeping with Lenin's views and the requirements of the epoch, however, the nomination of Party cadres—Bolsheviks as well as Mensheviks—followed the system of co-optation, the democratic principle of eligibility being almost unknown in the practice of the Russian Social Democracy.

This Leninist approach was put to a severe test by the revolutionary events that occurred in 1905 and 1906. Lenin

* Notes will be found at the end of the article.

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himself was the first to realize this. He had until then defended the idea of a Party with a very restricted membership. In February 1905, however, he stated that "we must considerably increase the membership of all Party and Party-connected organizations in order to be able to keep up to some extent with the stream of popular revolutionary energy which has been a hundredfold strengthened. . . . Recruit more young workers, extend the normal framework of all Party organizations. . . . *Hundreds* of new organizations should be set up."[4]

Lenin developed these ideas as the 1905 Revolution unfolded. They had a twofold meaning: on the one hand, they marked the transformation of the elitist conception of the Party into that of a mass Party; and on the other, they implied a reorientation of the relationship between the revolutionary organization and the masses, i.e., a new way of viewing the problem of spontaneity.

The decision to broaden Party membership—and notably, to grant a more active role to working-class elements whose role until then had been almost negligible—had a profound effect on the nature of the Leninist organization. In 1905 the Bolshevik and Menshevik groups in Russia had a combined membership of only 8,400. By 1907 this number had risen to 84,000 (46,000 Bolsheviks and 38,000 Mensheviks). One year after the outbreak of the revolution, Lenin, anticipating the actual development of the revolutionary organization, had already, for the first time, described it as a "mass party."[5] This expression, however, referred not only to the number of recruits, but also to the structures and methods of action of the Party, concerning which Lenin stated: "The new form of organization, or rather the new form of the basic organizational nucleus of the workers' party, must be definitely much broader than were the old circles. Apart from this, the new nucleus will most likely have to be a less rigid, more 'free,' more 'loose' organization. . . ." Previously a staunch advocate of absolute committee powers, Lenin now held that the "previous formal prerogatives [of these committees] inevitably lose their significance at the present time."[6] He advocated, moreover, a profound change in the activities of the Social Democracy; without sacrificing its clan-

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destine organizations, it was nevertheless "absolutely necessary to create . . . new legal and semi-legal Party organizations."[7] Lenin, although the principal initiator of the clandestine Social Democratic Party, and although he remained convinced of the necessity of maintaining the underground character of some activists and aspects of the Party, observed: "Our Party has stagnated while working underground . . . it has been suffocating underground during the last few years. The 'underground' is breaking up. . . ."[8]

Origin of Democratic Centralism

In *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back,* Lenin had explained that the debate between the Bolshevik adherents of centralism and their Menshevik opponents could be reduced to the basic question of "bureaucracy *versus* democracy."[9] In *What Is To Be Done?* he had already stated that in a context in which Russian socialism was forced underground and exposed to constant police repression, respect for democratic principles should be sacrificed to the requirements of security and effectiveness. Such principles "amidst the gloom of the autocracy and the domination of gendarmerie [are] . . . nothing more than a *useless and harmful toy.*"[10] The 1905 and 1906 upheavals swept away these concepts which Lenin himself rather inappropriately described as "bureaucratic." The revolution in fact was hardly three months old when he affirmed "the *full* assertion of the elective principle, possible and necessary under conditions of political freedom. . . . Even under the autocracy this principle could be applied to a much larger extent than it is today."[11] The adoption of the elective principle throughout the Party was a basic condition for democratization. There was another condition: restriction of the almost arbitrary powers of the committees and, at the top, of the Central Committee. Urged on by Lenin, the Bolsheviks adopted this course. The Bolshevik Congress of April 1905 declared itself in favor of "committee autonomy" with respect to the Central Committee, and the latter's authority was seriously affected. A year later, Lenin expressed his satisfaction at the "democratic basis" of the St. Petersburg organization. He explained that "*all* the

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Party members discuss and *decide* questions concerning the political campaigns of the proletariat, and that *all* the Party members *determine* the line of tactics of the Party organizations."[12] For many months, in fact, life in the Bolshevik organizations was very intense; there were prolonged and vigorous debates which saw a clash between various tendencies. The reunification of the Bolshevik and Menshevik committees into a single movement underlined the necessity of allowing clearly delineated ideological tendencies to confront each other openly.

It was in this period and climate that a principle arose which the communist movement would make its own, at least on paper, and which is constantly referred to nowadays—the principle of *democratic centralism*. It reflected originally the accommodation between the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions; although adopted by the (Unity) Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, held in Stockholm in 1906 and dominated by the Mensheviks, it was nevertheless incorporated into the statutory rules of the Party at Lenin's insistence. It was Lenin who offered a resolution at the congress stating that "the principle of democratic centralism in the Party is now universally accepted."[13] The resolution itself was extremely laconic, but the ensuing discussion revealed the significance which Lenin attached to democratic centralism. He declared, for instance, that it was necessary "really to apply the principles of democratic centralism in Party organization, to work tirelessly to make the local organizations the principal organizational units of the Party in fact, and not merely in name, and to see to it that all the higher-standing bodies are elected, accountable, and subject to recall."[14] The eligibility and revocability of the cadres—their genuine representativeness—were therefore integral to wider autonomy for the sections.

There was more. Democratic centralism, in Lenin's view, also implied "universal and full *freedom to criticize,* so long as this does not disturb the unity *of a definite action*; it rules out *all* criticism which disrupts or makes difficult the *unity* of an action decided on by the Party."[15] And on the same theme: "If we have really and seriously decided to introduce democratic centralism in our Party . . . we must have these [Party] ques-

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tions discussed in the press, at meetings, in circles and at group meetings."[16] And in connection with the debate in the Russian socialist movement on the chances for armed insurrection, Lenin added: "In the heat of battle, when the proletarian army is straining every nerve, *no* criticism *whatever* can be permitted in its ranks. But before the call for action is issued, there should be the broadest and freest discussion. . . ."[17]

Freedom of discussion. Unity of action. The question remains as to who has the power to issue these "calls for action" which suspend the right of free criticism. Lenin's answer was unequivocal: only the Party *Congress,* and *not* the Central Committee, has this power. He considered it even legitimate to wage an "ideological struggle" *against* Central Committee resolutions which he considered "mistaken." On several occasions the Bolsheviks, at Lenin's urging, refused to carry out decisions made by the Central Committee elected at the Stockholm Congress. By invoking the principle of democratic centralism in those instances, Lenin recognized implicitly that this principle restricted the powers of the Central Committee with respect to a more broadly based body—the Congress.

There was still another aspect to this definition of democratic centralism: the right of a minority to exist and express itself freely within the Party. To be sure, Lenin had already invoked these minority rights in 1903 and 1904, but his attitude in this respect became particularly explicit in 1905 and 1906. The reunification of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, moreover, added a new dimension to the problem. It became necessary to safeguard the revolutionary strength of the Party against ideological confusion. Lenin drew the following conclusion: "There can be no mass party, no party of a class, without full clarity of essential shadings, without an open struggle between tendencies."[18] He thus recognized the *rights of tendencies,* and even of *factions* which he described at the Stockholm congress as "quite natural."[19]

To be sure, this broad and "liberal" definition of democratic centralism and minority rights—broader and more "liberal" than in many parties that profess to be democratic—was advanced at a period when the Mensheviks constituted a major-

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ity in the Russian Social Democratic Party. It was nevertheless not fortuitous that the principle of democratic centralism should have been adopted, and that Lenin should have decided to translate this principle into reality, at a time when Leninism, under the impact of the revolutionary events and the offensive of the masses, was for the first time coming to grips with its very reason for existing—the revolution.

From Cadre Organization to the Spontaneity of the Masses

Without ever scorning or consistently distrusting the revolutionary possibilities of the working class, Lenin had nevertheless based an important part of the theories expounded in *What Is To Be Done?* on the conviction that these possibilities—which are latent, and frustrated by the dominant influence of bourgeois ideology—must be "stimulated" from the outside. The initial statement of his theories reflected Lenin's belief that the overwhelming majority of workers are capable only of spontaneous actions which, in themselves, are essentially job-oriented in nature, and cannot effectively challenge the "system" and generate socialist consciousness. This pessimism had now been shown to be unjustified: without a powerful outside "stimulus," and without an organization capable of instigating, orienting, and directing the activity of the masses, these masses were developing a basically political and revolutionary movement of extraordinary breadth and depth. The proletariat, moreover, frequently evidenced greater clarity of purpose and more lucid judgment than the leaders who were supposed to guide them. Drawing, for example, the lessons from the December 1905 Moscow insurrection, Lenin recognized that "the proletariat sensed sooner than its leaders the change in the objective conditions of the struggle and the need for a transition from the strike to an uprising."[20] This statement dates from August 1906. Six months earlier, Rosa Luxemburg had declared that "the masses as usual at any turning point of the battle only push the leaders spontaneously to more advanced goals."[21]

This is not the only analogy to be found at that time between Lenin's ideas *as transformed by the revolutionary events* and those of Rosa Luxemburg, whose views seemed to

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be confirmed by Lenin's. In March 1906, Lenin expressed himself in a manner strikingly similar to the theories which Rosa Luxemburg had developed in *The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Union.* He writes: "Mention a period in Russian or world history, find any six months or six years, when as much was done for the free and *independent* organization of the masses of the people as was done during the six weeks of the revolutionary whirlwind in Russia. . . ."[22] (Emphasis added.) Like Luxemburg, Lenin now declared that the general strike, although due to the initiative of the masses and not of a Party, was also a form of organization. He spoke very highly of "the organizational abilities of the people, particularly of the proletariat."[23] This amounted to a substitution of the masses for the Party in one of its essential functions, and came close to rehabilitating the proletarian spontaneity which Lenin had formerly—especially in *What Is To Be Done?*—so violently attacked.

Lenin's distrust of working-class spontaneity had led him in 1903 to draw up Party statutes designed to provide a "bulwark" against opportunism and prevent the entry into the organization of doubtful, vacillating, unworthy elements incapable of becoming part of the elite, of the proletarian vanguard. These fears had now been swept away. Referring to the possibility that as a result of a "sudden influx of large numbers of non-Social Democrats into the Party . . . the Party would be dissolved among the masses . . . [and] cease to be the conscious vanguard of its class, its role would be reduced to that of a tail," Lenin warned against exaggerating this danger: "It would be simply ridiculous to doubt that the workers who belong to our Party, or who will join it tomorrow . . . will be Social Democrats in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred." Moreover, there was no need to "invent bugaboos. . . . in every live and growing party there will always be elements of instability, vacillation, wavering. But these elements can be influenced, and they will submit to the influence of the steadfast and solid core of Social Democrats."[24]

In January 1905, Lenin was still urging the Social Democracy to "dominate [the] . . . spontaneous movement of the

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masses," thus using an expression that corresponded to the very essence of his theory concerning the relationship between the Party and the working class. In June of that same year, he had denounced the slogan of "workers' initiative" as dangerous. A few months later, having absorbed the lessons of the revolution, he was discovering the great virtues of proletarian spontaneity and initiative.

Lenin and Permanent Revolution

Until 1905 Lenin had paid little attention to the problems of revolutionary strategy, confining himself to accepting the basic Marxist approach to the question of the sequence of bourgeois revolution and socialist revolution. At most, he had suggested that in the Russian context the peasantry might be called upon to play a positive role in the struggle to destroy the old semi-feudal social order. He remained in any case convinced that the bourgeois revolution and the proletarian revolution were two distinct processes separated by an historical stage characterized politically by liberal democracy and economically by capitalist development. Faithful, in this respect, to an orthodoxy he had not yet come to view as inadequate, he did not anticipate the contradictions that would result from the "classical" Marxist perspective as soon as its assumptions were applied mechanistically to largely pre-capitalist societies such as Tsarist Russia. One example will suffice: how could a successful bourgeois revolution be imagined in a country where the bourgeoisie, contrary to its history in Western Europe, played a secondary role in the development of society, and lacked dynamism and a spirit of enterprise in economic as well as political domains?

The outbreak of revolution in 1905 forced Lenin to confront the problems of revolutionary strategy and go beyond the generalities he had until then considered sufficient. In the summer of 1905, he wrote a long and important pamphlet, *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution,* in which he subjected the attitude of the Russian bourgeoisie to very severe criticism. Judging it both incapable of leading a revolution and hostile to its victory, he thought that the bour-

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geoisie's revolutionary function would have to be assumed by the working class. The latter's numerical weakness, however, forced it to seek allies who, in Lenin's view, were to be found not in the intelligentsia or the urban middle classes, but in the population of the countryside. This was the origin of the formula of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry." But in spite of the effort of political imagination necessitated by this approach, Lenin remained a captive of certain formulations. He continued to emphasize the distinction between the bourgeois revolution and the socialist revolution, and remained convinced that the revolutionary alliance of workers and (poor) peasants did not negate the essentially bourgeois character of the political, economic, and social upheaval that was to shake Russian society. Only Trotsky and Parvus developed a theory which, taking into consideration revolutionary dynamism in all its creative richness and complexity, rejected the old dogmas, and broke at last with orthodoxy. This was the origin of the idea of permanent revolution.

Desirous of playing up the antagonism between Lenin and Trotsky, the historians of the Soviet Union have emphasized the irreconcilable nature of their views in regard to permanent revolution. Those familiar with Lenin's propensity for sharp and often acid polemic and verbal violence, however, cannot fail to be struck by the moderate tone of his criticism of Trotsky's theories regarding permanent revolution. The future founder of Soviet Russia had not had the occasion to read the study in which Trotsky elaborated his ideas. Lenin, moreover, modified his own views as the revolutionary upsurge of the masses pushed forward; the contrast between the "classicism" of his earlier views and the character of his new ideas is at times so striking that one readily finds an almost "Trotskyist" point of view in his writings of that period. Here, too, his pragmatism and his characteristic tendency to reject doctrinal considerations in favor of the lessons and requirements of action induced Leninism to come to terms with reality.

Alluding to the Marxist thesis regarding the bourgeois and socialist stages of the revolution, Lenin declared in the spring of 1905: "If we interpret this correct Marxist scheme . . . to

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mean that we must measure off in advance, *before any ascent begins,* a very modest part, let us say, not more than one step, if, in keeping with this scheme and before any ascent begins, we sought to *'draw up a plan of action in the revolutionary epoch,'* we should be virtuosi of philistinism."[25] As for the transition from the bourgeois revolution to the proletarian revolution, he stated in *Two Tactics of Social Democracy* that it might be short and could be hastened by the Party's attitude. Pursuing his analysis, he added that there was no real gap between the bourgeois and proletarian stages: "The complete victory of the present revolution will mark the end of the democratic revolution and the beginning of a determined struggle for a socialist revolution."[26] A few months later he distinguished between the different stages of revolutionary development, and stated that the period in which the bourgeoisie would adopt an overtly hostile attitude toward the revolution would be followed by another period which he described as follows: "On the basis of the relations established [during the preceding period] a new crisis and a new struggle develop and blaze forth, with the proletariat now fighting to preserve its democratic gains for the sake of a socialist revolution. This struggle would have been almost hopeless for the Russian proletariat alone and its defeat would have been as inevitable as the defeat of the . . . French proletariat in 1871, *had the European socialist proletariat* not come to the assistance of the Russian proletariat." And Lenin concluded: "In such conditions the Russian proletariat can win a second victory. The cause is no longer hopeless. The second victory will be the *socialist revolution in Europe.*"[27] Since these different stages were likely to succeed each other very rapidly, and since, moreover, these stages seemed to be part of a continuous process, his analysis, although quite summary, was nevertheless extremely close to that of Trotsky. As a matter of fact, in an apparently innocuous article written by Lenin in September 1905, there appears the following, typically "Trotskyist" sentence: "From the democratic revolution we shall at once, and precisely in accordance with the measure of our strength, the strength of the class-conscious and organized proletariat, begin to pass to

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the socialist revolution. We stand for uninterrupted revolution. We shall not stop half-way."[28]

On the one hand, permanent revolution; on the other, uninterrupted revolution. Lenin used this formulation but once. But he used it. Is it not significant that it crops up at the moment when the revolutionary storm, having shaken Lenin's theories on organization, also put his strategic concepts to the test? After the defeat of the proletariat in 1906 and the restoration of Tsarism, Lenin apparently abandoned the perspective of "uninterrupted revolution," which he had envisaged in 1905. It took until 1917 for this perspective to reappear, assert itself, and triumph.

Lenin's Struggle Against the Bolsheviks

In 1905, therefore, the organizational principles and strategic concepts of Bolshevism, both as theory and instrument, underwent a profound transformation. For the true nature of this phenomenon to be understood, it remains to be shown that in order to bring about this change Lenin had to engage in frequent struggle against his own followers, and that these struggles, moreover, were waged against men who based their opposition on the very principles of Leninism—in other words, that the maturation, democratization, and radicalization of Bolshevism were achieved through a confrontation between Lenin and numerous Bolsheviks who clung to formulations and schematic views elaborated by Lenin himself. This was, for instance, the case with respect to the change in Party structures. Lenin had to oppose those whom he called *Komitetchiki,* committee bureaucrats, who, as he himself had done in 1902, cautioned the Party against the temptation of "playing at democracy." The debates at the April 1905 Bolshevik Congress in London were particularly stormy. With far from unanimous support, Lenin insisted on the need to "proletarianize" the Party cadres. But the cadres of professional revolutionaries openly expressed their distrust of the workers whom they considered incapable of taking on the functions of leadership. Listening to their spokesmen, Lenin says, "I could hardly keep my seat."[29] He submitted an amendment to the statutes, obligating the Party to increase the number of workers in the Bolshevik

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committees. The amendment was rejected. According to Krupskaya, Lenin "was not greatly upset at his point of view receiving such a severe rebuff at the Congress . . . because he realized that the approaching revolution was bound to radically cure the Party of this incapacity to give the committees a more pronounced worker make-up."[80]

This was, in fact, what happened. But the tone of some of Lenin's letters clearly indicates the strength of the opposition he encountered in his own organization. In a letter addressed to a St. Petersburg Bolshevik in February 1905, he wrote: "Be sure to put us in *direct* touch with new forces, with the youth, with newly formed circles. . . . So far *not one* of the St. Petersburgers (shame on them) has given us a *single* new connection. . . . It's a scandal, our undoing, our ruin! Take a lesson from the Mensheviks, for Christ's sake."[81] And again: "You must be sure to organize, organize, and organize *hundreds* of circles, completely pushing into the background the customary, well-meant committee (hierarchic) stupidities. This is a time of war. Either you create *new,* young, fresh, energetic battle organizations everywhere . . . or you will go under, wearing the aureole of 'committee bureaucrats.' "[82] In another letter addressed to the Bolshevik combat committee of the capital in October 1905, he urged his followers to send "for heaven's sake . . . all 'functions, rights, and privileges' to the devil."[83]

His revolutionary flexibility was already beginning to clash with the conservative inertia of the Party structures, although the latter were still not far removed from their origins.

A similar confrontation took place in connection with the role to be granted by the Bolshevik organization to the most original creation of 1905—the Soviets. Many of Lenin's followers, in fact, regarded them with distrust and hostility. Were the Soviets not the result of spontaneous mass action, an outcome of the spontaneity against which Lenin had warned them? Didn't they represent an institution that could hardly be said to have a structure, that lacked a hierarchic and ideological framework, that was independent of the Social Democratic organization which Lenin—yes, Lenin himself—had proclaimed as absolutely necessary? In this regard, Leninism was equally

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unprepared to grasp and accept the phenomenon of Soviets. This was especially the case with respect to the most famous Soviet, that of St. Petersburg, which, moreover, was controlled by the Mensheviks. In fact, Bogdanov, who was at the time the leading member of the Russian Bureau of the Bolshevik organization, went so far as to maintain that the Soviet might become the nucleus of an anti-socialist party. In his view, the Bolsheviks should force it to accept their program as well as the authority of their Central Committee, after which it would be absorbed into the Party. With the approval of many Leninists, Bogdanov added that if the Soviet refused to follow this course, the Bolsheviks should withdraw their support and denounce its political line. Krasin, the Party representative in the St. Petersburg Soviet, demanded officially that it accept the program and authority of the Social Democracy.

Lenin's attitude was much more flexible than that of his comrades. On the eve of his return to St. Petersburg in November 1905, the Bolshevik organ *Novaya Zhizn* published an article expressing profound distrust of the Soviets. In his reply Lenin stated that the author of the article in question "is wrong in raising the question . . . 'the Soviet of Workers' Deputies or the Party?' I think that it is wrong to put the question in this way and that the decision must *certainly* be: *both* the Soviet of Workers' Deputies *and* the Party."[34] Going counter to the views of his followers in the capital, Lenin declared: "I think it inadvisable to demand that the Soviet of Workers' Deputies should accept the Social Democratic program and join the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party." Adding that the "Soviet of Workers' Deputies should be regarded as the embryo of a *provisional revolutionary government*," Lenin was in fact pleading for its autonomy with respect to the political parties.[35]

The official newspaper of the St. Petersburg Bolsheviks *refused* to publish Lenin's point of view.

This tension between Lenin and his followers, by whose hesitations and timidity he was so distressed, can be traced in other instances as well. For example, the "Bloody Sunday" which precipitated the 1905 Revolution was regarded with great reserve by the St. Petersburg Bolsheviks who had misgivings concerning the primitive character and certain religious aspects

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of the demonstration led by the priest Gapon. Lenin, on the contrary, was enthusiastic. From January on, he urged on the struggle and its radicalization, following with mounting hopes the progress of the revolutionary offensive. These feelings were not shared by all Bolsheviks. At their London congress in April 1905, Bogdanov, one of the most important leaders of the organization, expressed the view of what was undoubtedly a considerable portion of the membership when he urged the cadres to insist above all on "the importance of discipline," and to persist in this course "unabashed by unreasonable accusations that they are slowing down the development of the revolutionary mood of the masses."[36]

These misgivings concerning the spontaneous action of the proletariat that had little or no organization persisted throughout 1905, together with a very pronounced hesitation to commit the Party to an armed insurrection. Lenin, on the contrary, defended this course with all his strength, but had to compromise with the more moderate elements, notably on the wording of the resolutions which the Bolsheviks at the London Congress devoted to the problem of insurrection. Lenin, however, declared at the Congress that "we underestimated the significance and the inevitability of the uprising."[37] He expressed the desire of seeing a discussion not only of the principle of armed uprising, but also of its practical preparation. He kept returning to this theme throughout the summer and autumn of 1905. Judging by the tone of his appeals, it would appear that his views were not very favorably received by his followers.

June 20, 1905: "Away, then, with all doubts and vacillations. Let it be realized by one and all, now and without delay, how absurd and discreditable are all pretexts today for evading this urgent task of the most energetic preparation of the armed uprising." And he added an urgent warning against "the danger of delays."[38]

October 16, 1905: "It horrifies me—I give you my word—it horrifies me to find that there has been talk about bombs for *over six months,* yet not one has been made! And it is the most learned people who are doing the talking. . . . Go to the youth, gentlemen! That is the only remedy!" And he insisted: "Go to the youth. Form fighting squads *at once* everywhere.

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. . . Let groups be at once organized of three, ten, thirty, etc., persons. Let them arm themselves at once as best they can, be it with a revolver, a knife, a rag soaked in kerosene for starting fires . . . the evil today is our inertness. . . ."[39]

Last days of October 1905: "All delays, disputes, procrastination and indecision spell ruin to the cause of the uprising."[40]

"All delays, disputes, procrastination and indecision spell ruin to the cause of the uprising." Twelve years later, almost to the day, Lenin used the same language to break down similar resistance on the part of his adherents. We have here a striking and characteristic analogy: Lenin's attitude in 1905, in effect, foreshadows his attitude in 1917. Lenin in 1905—the first challenge to a doctrine by its author, Lenin's first revolt, as it were, against Leninism.

This revolt contained the seeds of a revolution. But before 1917 history would again furnish a demonstration *a contrario*. The Revolution of 1905 had revealed the profoundly democratic component of Lenin's strategy. The triumph of the counter-revolution, beginning in 1907, brought with it on the other hand an intensification of the authoritarian elements also present in his theories. The proletarian victories of 1905 had imposed on Lenin, more than on the Leninists, a revision, sometimes agonizing, of certain of his ideas. But this revision was as ephemeral as the revolutionary successes which were its cause. When Tsarism succeeded in re-establishing itself and the period began, in 1908, which is known in the history of the Russian workers' movement as the "years of reaction," Bolshevism was reduced to the dimensions, and acquired the characteristics, of a sect. The defeat and discouragement of the masses, the imprisonment and death of thousands of militants, the departure into exile of the socialist leaders, the return of even more severe conditions of clandestinity than existed before 1905, forced the Leninist organization back into its old rut. It was then that authoritarian tendencies developed, an urge to monolithism, a propensity to dogmatism, and other negative traits which the historian cannot ignore when he draws up the balance sheet of Leninism.

These dark years ended shortly before the beginning of

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the First World War with the unleashing of a revolutionary offensive which was braked but not broken by the war. And it was then, and more than ever under the pressure of the masses, that Lenin achieved what remains his greatest historical merit: to have realized in 1917 the exceptional and decisive identification between a class and its party.

The ebbing of the revolutionary tide, the failure of the world revolution, the withdrawal into itself of Soviet Russia, sounded the knell of this symbiosis. History, however, even while recording its disappearance, cannot forget it and must preserve its lesson. This lesson is simple: revolutionary parties, even those which claim to *direct* the masses, fulfill their functions only in privileged moments when, renouncing the role of guide for that of cadre, they reverse the relation connecting them with the proletariat and *submit* to the liberating impetus which emanates from it.

(*Translated by Alfred Ehrenfeld*)

NOTES

(All references to Lenin's writings in the following notes are to the English *Collected Works* of Lenin).

1. *Letter to a Comrade on Our Organizational Tasks* (September 1902), *Collected Works,* 1961, vol. 6, p. 237.
2. *Ibid.,* p. 242.
3. *Ibid.,* pp. 243-244.
4. *New Tasks and New Forces* (February 1905), 1962, vol. 8, pp. 217-219.
5. *Should We Boycott the State Duma?* (January 1906), 1962, vol. 10, p. 99.
6. *The Reorganization of the Party* (November 1905), 1962, vol. 10, pp. 33-34.
7. *Ibid.,* p. 29.
8. *Ibid.,* p. 32.
9. *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back,* 1961, vol. 7, p. 401.
10. *What Is To Be Done?,* 1961, vol. 5, p. 479.
11. *The Third Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.* (April 1905), 1962, vol. 8, p. 409.
12. *Let the Workers Decide* (June 1906), 1962, vol. 10, p. 503.
13. *A Tactical Platform for the Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.* (March 1906), 1962, vol. 10, p. 163.
14. *Report on the Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.* (May 1906), 1962, vol. 10, p. 376.
15. *Freedom to Criticize and Unity of Action* (May 1906), 1962, vol. 10, p. 443.

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16. *Report on the Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.* (May 1906), 1962, vol. 10, p. 380.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 381.
18. *But Who Are the Judges?* (November 1907), 1962, vol. 13, p. 159.
19. *Report on the Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.*, 1962, vol. 10, p. 323.
20. *Lessons of the Moscow Uprising* (August 1906), 1962, vol. 11, p. 173.
21. Quoted in J.P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg* (London, 1966), vol. 1, p. 333.
22. *The Victory of the Cadets and the Tasks of the Workers' Party* (March 1906), 1962, vol. 10, p. 258.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 259.
24. *The Reorganization of the Party* (November 1905), 1962, vol. 10, pp. 31-32.
25. *On the Provisional Revolutionary Government* (May-June 1905), 1962, vol. 8, p. 465.
26. *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* (June-July 1905), 1962, vol. 9, p. 130.
27. *The Stages, the Trend, and the Prospects of the Revolution* (end of 1905-beginning of 1906), 1962, vol. 10, p. 92.
28. *Social Democracy's Attitude Toward the Peasant Movement* (September 1905), 1962, vol. 9, pp. 236-237.
29. *The Third Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.*, 1962, vol. 8, p. 411.
30. Krupskaya, *Reminiscences of Lenin* (Moscow, 1959), p. 127.
31. *Letter to Gusev* (February 15, 1905), 1966, vol. 34, p. 296.
32. *A Letter to Bogdanov and Gusev* (February 11, 1905), 1962, vol. 8, p. 146.
33. *Letter to the Combat Committee of the St. Petersburg Committee* (October 16, 1905), 1962, vol. 9, p. 345.
34. *Our Tasks and the Soviet of Workers Deputies*, 1962, vol. 10, p. 19.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
36. S. Schwarz, *The Russian Revolution of 1905: the Workers Movement and the Formation of Bolshevism and Menshevism* (Chicago-London, 1967), p. 133.
37. *The Third Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.*, 1962, vol. 8, p. 370.
38. *The Struggle of the Proletariat and the Servility of the Bourgeoisie*, 1962, vol. 8, p. 538.
39. *Letter to the Combat Committee of the St. Petersburg Committee*, 1962, vol. 9, pp. 344-346.
40. *Tasks of Revolutionary Army Contingents*, 1962, vol. 9, p. 424.

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Ralph Miliband

THE STATE AND REVOLUTION

The State and Revolution is rightly regarded as one of Lenin's most important works. It addresses itself to questions of the utmost importance for socialist theory and practice, none of which have lost any of their relevance—rather the reverse. And as a statement of the Marxist theory of the state, both before and particularly after the conquest of power, it has, because it was written by Lenin, enjoyed an exceptionally authoritative status for successive generations of socialists, never more so than in recent years, since its spirit and substance can so readily be invoked against the hyper-bureaucratic experience of Russian-type regimes, and against official Communist parties as well. In short, here, for intrinsic and circumstantial reasons, is indeed one of the "sacred texts" of Marxist thought.

"Sacred texts," however, are alien to the spirit of Marxism, or at least should be; and this is itself sufficient reason for submitting *The State and Revolution* to critical analysis. But there is also another and more specific reason for undertaking such an analysis, namely that this work of Lenin is commonly held, within the Marxist tradition, to provide a theoretical and indeed a practical solution to the all-important question of the socialist exercise of power. My own reading of it suggests, for what it is worth, a rather different conclusion: that *The State and Revolution,* far from resolving the problems with which it is concerned, only serves to underline their complexity, and to emphasize something which the experience of more than half a century has in any case richly—and tragically—served to confirm, namely that the exercise of socialist power remains the Achilles Heel of Marxism. This is why, in a year which will

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witness so much legitimate celebration of Lenin's genius and achievements, a critical appraisal of *The State and Revolution* may not come amiss. For it is only by probing the gaps in the argument which it puts forward that the discussion of issues which are fundamental to the socialist project may be advanced.

The basic point upon which the whole of Lenin's argument rests, and to which he returns again and again, derives from Marx and Engels. This is that while all previous revolutions have "perfected" (i.e., reinforced) the state machine, "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the state machinery and wield it for its own purposes"; that it must instead smash, break, destroy that machinery. The cardinal importance which Lenin attaches to this idea has often been taken to mean that the purpose of *The State and Revolution* is to counterpose violent revolution to "peaceful transition." This is not so. The contraposition is certainly important, and Lenin did believe (much more categorically than Marx, incidentally) that the proletarian revolution could not be achieved save by violent means. But as the Italian Marxist Lucio Colletti has recently noted, "Lenin's polemic is not directed against those who do not wish for the seizure of power. The object of his attack is not *reformism*. On the contrary, it is directed against those who wish for the seizure of power but not for the destruction of the old state as well."[1]* "On the contrary" in the above quotation is too strong: Lenin is *also* arguing against reformism. But it is perfectly true that his main concern in *The State and Revolution* is to attack and reject any concept of revolution which does not take literally Marx's view that the bourgeois state must be smashed.

The obvious and crucial question which this raises is what kind of post-revolutionary state is to succeed the smashed bourgeois state. For it is of course one of the basic tenets of Marxism, and one of its basic differences with anarchism, that while the proletarian revolution must smash the old state, it does not abolish the state itself: *a* state remains in being, and even endures for a long time to come, even though it begins

* Numbered notes will be found at the end of the article.

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immediately to "wither away." What is most remarkable about the answer which Lenin gives to the question of the nature of the post-revolutionary state is how far he takes the concept of the "withering away" of the state in *The State and Revolution*: so far, in fact, that the state, on the morrow of the Revolution, has not only *begun* to wither away, but *is already at an advanced stage of decomposition.*

This, it must be noted at once, does not mean that the revolutionary *power* is to be weak. On the contrary, Lenin never fails to insist that it must be very strong indeed, and that it must remain strong over an extended period of time. What it does mean is that this power is not exercised by the state in the common meaning of that word, i.e., as a separate and distinct organ of power, however "democratic"; but that "the state" has been turned from "a state of bureaucrats" into "a state of armed workers." (p. 334)* This, Lenin notes, is "a state machine nevertheless," but "in the shape of armed workers who proceed to form a militia involving the entire population." (p. 336) Again, "all citizens are transformed into hired employees of the state, which consists of the armed workers"; (p. 336) and again, "the state, that is, the proletariat armed and organized as the ruling class." (p. 308) Identical or similar formulations occur throughout the work.

In *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky,* written after the Bolshevik seizure of power, Lenin fiercely rejected Kautsky's view that a class "can only dominate but not govern." "It is altogether wrong, also," Lenin wrote, "to say that a class cannot govern. Such an absurdity can only be uttered by a parliamentary *cretin* who sees nothing but bourgeois parliaments, who has noticed nothing but 'ruling parties.' "[2] *The State and Revolution* is precisely based on the notion that the proletariat *can* "govern," and not only "dominate," and that it must do so if the dictatorship of the proletariat is to be more than a slogan. "Revolution," Lenin also writes, "consists not in the new class commanding, governing with the aid of the *old* state machine, but in this class *smashing* this machine and

* All quotations from *The State and Revolution* are taken from V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works* (London, 1969) and the page reference is given in parentheses. Unless otherwise specified, all italics are in the text.

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commanding, governing with the aid of a *new* machine. Kautsky blurs over this *basic* idea of Marxism, or he does not understand it at all." (p. 347) This new "machine," as it appears in *The State and Revolution* is the state of the armed workers. What is involved here, to all appearances, is *unmediated* class rule, a notion much more closely associated with anarchism than with Marxism.

This needs to be qualified. But what is so striking about *The State and Revolution* is *how little* it needs to be qualified, as I propose to show.

Lenin strongly attacks the anarchists, insisting on the need to retain the state in the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat. "We are not utopians," he writes, "we do not 'dream' of dispensing *at once* with all administration, with all subordination." (p. 298) But he then goes on:

> The subordination, however, must be to the armed vanguard of all the exploited and working people, *i.e., to the proletariat.* [Emphasis added.] A beginning can and must be made at once, overnight, to replace the specific "bossing" of state officials by the simple functions of "foremen and accountants," functions which are already fully within the ability of the average town dweller and can well be performed for workmen's wages. *We,* the workers, shall organize large-scale production on the basis of what capitalism has already created, relying on our own experience as workers, establishing strict, iron discipline backed by the state of the armed workers. We shall reduce the role of state officials to that of simply carrying out our instructions as responsible, revocable, moderately paid "foremen and accountants" (of course, with the aid of technicians of all sorts, types, and degree). (p. 298)

Clearly, some kind of officialdom continues to exist, but equally clearly, it functions under the strictest and continuous supervision and control of the armed workers; and officials are, as Lenin notes repeatedly, revocable at any time. "Bureaucrats," in this view, have not been altogether abolished; but they have been reduced to the role of utterly subordinate executants of the popular will, as expressed by the armed workers.

As for a second main institution of the old state, the standing army, it has been replaced, in the words quoted earlier, by armed workers who proceed to form a militia involving the whole population.

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Thus, two institutions which Lenin views as "most characteristic" (p. 283) of the bourgeois state machine have been radically dealt with: one of them, the bureaucracy, has been drastically reduced in size and what remains of it has been utterly subdued by direct popular supervision, backed by the power of instant revocability; while the other, the standing army, has actually been abolished.

Even so, Lenin stresses, the centralized state has *not* been abolished. But it takes the form of "voluntary centralism, of the voluntary amalgamation of the communes into a nation, of the voluntary fusion of the proletarian communes, for the purpose of destroying bourgeois rule and the bourgeois state machine." (p. 301)

Here too, the obvious question concerns the *institutions* through which the dictatorship of the proletariat may be expressed. For Lenin does speak in *The State and Revolution* "of a gigantic replacement of certain institutions by other institutions of a fundamentally different type." (p. 293) But *The State and Revolution* has actually very little to say about institutions, save for some very brief references to the Soviets of Workers and Soldiers Deputies.

Lenin reserves some of his choicest epithets for one form of representative institution, namely, "the venal and rotten parliamentarism of bourgeois society." (p. 297) However, "the way out of parliamentarism is not, of course, the abolition of representative institutions and the elective principle, but the conversion of the representative institutions from talking shops into 'working bodies.'" (p. 296) The institutions which embody this principle are, as noted, the Soviets. On one occasion, Lenin speaks of "the simple *organization* of the armed people (such as the Soviet of Workers and Soldiers Deputies . . .)"; (p. 329) on another, of "the conversion of *all* citizens into workers and other employees of *one* huge 'syndicate'—the whole state—and the complete subordination of the entire work of this syndicate to a genuinely democratic state, the state of the Soviets of Workers and Soldiers Deputies"; (p. 334) and the third such reference is in the form of a question: "Kautsky develops a 'superstitious reverence' for 'ministries'; but why can they not

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be replaced, say, by committees of specialists working under sovereign, all-powerful Soviets and Workers and Soldiers Deputies?" (p. 346) It must be noted, however, that the Soviets are "sovereign and all-powerful" in relation to the "committees" of which Lenin speaks. In regard to their constituents, the deputies are of course subject to recall at any time: "representation" must here be conceived as operating within the narrow limits determined by popular rule.

The "state" of which Lenin speaks in *The State and Revolution* is therefore one in which the standing army has ceased to exist; where what remains of officialdom has come to be completely subordinated to the armed workers; and where the representatives of these armed workers are similarly subordinated to them. It is this "model" which would seem to justify the contention, advanced earlier, that the "state" which expresses the dictatorship of the proletariat is, already on the morrow of the revolution, at a stage of advanced decomposition.

The problems which this raises are legion; and the fact that they are altogether ignored in *The State and Revolution* cannot be left out of account in a realistic assessment of it.

The first of these problems is that of the *political mediation* of the revolutionary power. By this I mean that the dictatorship of the proletariat is obviously inconceivable without *some* degree at least of political articulation and leadership, which implies political organization. But the extraordinary fact, given the whole cast of Lenin's mind, is that the political element which otherwise occupies so crucial a place in his thought, the party, receives such scant attention in *The State and Revolution*.

There are three references in the work to the party, two of which have no direct bearing on the issue of the dictatorship of the proletariat. One of these is an incidental remark concerning the need for the party to engage in the struggle "against religion which stupefies the people." (p. 318) The second, equally incidental, notes that "in revising the program of our Party, we must by all means take the advice of Engels and Marx into consideration, in order to come nearer the truth, to restore Marxism by ridding it of its distortions, to guide the

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struggle of the working class for its emancipation more correctly." (p. 310) The third and most relevant reference goes as follows: "By educating the workers' party, Marxism educates the vanguard of the proletariat, capable of assuming power and *leading the whole people* to socialism, of directing and organizing the new system, of being the teacher, the guide, the leader of all the working and exploited people in organizing their social life without the bourgeoisie and against the bourgeoisie." (p. 281)

It is not entirely clear from this passage whether it is the *proletariat* which is capable of assuming power, leading, directing, organizing, etc.; or whether it is the *vanguard* of the proletariat, i.e., the workers' party, which is so designated. Both interpretations are possible. On the first, the question of political leadership is left altogether in abeyance. It may be recalled that it was so left by Marx in his considerations on the Paris Commune and on the dictatorship of the proletariat. But it is not something which *can,* it seems to me, be left in abeyance in the discussion of revolutionary rule—save in terms of a theory of spontaneity which constitutes an avoidance of the problem rather than its resolution. On the other hand, the second interpretation, which fits in better with everything we know of Lenin's appraisal of the importance of the party, serves only to raise the question without tackling it. That question is of course absolutely paramount to the whole meaning of the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat: what is the relationship between the *proletariat* whose dictatorship the revolution is deemed to establish, and the *party* which educates, leads, directs, organizes, etc.? It is only on the basis of an *assumption* of a symbiotic, organic relationship between the two, that the question vanishes altogether; but while such a relationship may well have existed between the Bolshevik Party and the Russian proletariat in the months preceding the October Revolution, i.e., when Lenin wrote *The State and Revolution,* the assumption that this kind of relationship can ever be taken as an automatic and permanent fact belongs to the rhetoric of power, not to its reality.

Whether it is the party or the proletariat which is, in the passage above, designated as leading the whole people to social-

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ism, the fact is that Lenin did of course assert the former's central role after the Bolsheviks had seized power. Indeed, by 1919 he was asserting its exclusive political guidance. "Yes, the dictatorship of one party!" he said then. "We stand upon it and cannot depart from this ground, since this is the party which in the course of decades has won for itself the position of vanguard of the whole factory and industrial proletariat." In fact, "the dictatorship of the working class is carried into effect by the party of the Bolsheviks which since 1905 or earlier has been united with the whole revolutionary proletariat."[3] Later on, as E. H. Carr also notes, he described the attempt to distinguish between the dictatorship of the class and the dictatorship of the party as proof of an "unbelievable and inextricable confusion of thought";[4] and in 1921 he was bluntly asserting, against the criticisms of the Workers' Opposition, that "the dictatorship of the proletariat is impossible except through the Communist Party."[5]

This may well have been the case, but it must be obvious that this is an altogether different "model" of the exercise of revolutionary power from that presented in *The State and Revolution,* and that it radically transforms the meaning to be attached to the "dictatorship of the proletariat." At the very least, it brings into the sharpest possible form the question of the relation between the ruling party and the proletariat. Nor is it even the *party* which is here in question, but rather the party *leadership,* in accordance with that grim dynamic which Trotsky had prophetically outlined after the split of Russian Social Democracy between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, namely, that the "party organization [the caucus] at first substitutes itself for the party as a whole; then the Central Committee substitutes itself for the organization; and finally a single 'dictator' substitutes itself for the Central Committee. . . ."[6]

For a time after the Revolution, Lenin was able to believe and claim that there was no conflict between the dictatorship of the proletariat and the dictatorship of the party; and Stalin was to make that claim the basis and legitimation of his own total rule. In the case of Lenin, very few things are as significant a measure of his greatness as that he should have come, while in power, to question that identification, and to be ob-

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sessed by the thought that it could not simply be taken for granted. He might well, as his successors were to do, have tried to conceal from himself the extent of the gulf between the claim and the reality. That he did not, and that he died a deeply troubled man,[7] is not the least important part of his legacy, though it is not the part of his legacy which is likely to be evoked, let alone celebrated, in the country of the Bolshevik Revolution.

It is of course very tempting to attribute the transformation of the dictatorship of the proletariat, as presented in *The State and Revolution* into the dictatorship of the party, or rather of its leaders, to the particular circumstances of Russia after 1917—to backwardness, civil war, foreign intervention, devastation, massive deprivation, popular disaffection, and the failure of other countries to heed the call of revolution.

The temptation, it seems to me, ought to be resisted. Of course, the adverse circumstances with which the Bolsheviks had to cope were real and oppressive enough. But I would argue that these circumstances only aggravated, though certainly to an extreme degree, a problem which is *in any case* inherent in the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The problem arises because that dictatorship, even in the most favorable circumstances, is unrealizable without political mediation; and because the necessary introduction of the notion of political mediation into the "model" considerably affects the latter's character, to say the least. This is particularly the case if political mediation is conceived in terms of single-party rule. For such rule, even if "democratic centralism" is much more flexibly applied than has ever been the case, makes much more difficult, and may preclude, the institutionalization of what may loosely be called socialist pluralism. This is exceptionally difficult to achieve and may even be impossible in most revolutionary situations. But it is just as well to recognize that unless adequate provision is made for *alternative* channels of expression and political articulation, which the concept of single party rule excludes by definition, any talk of socialist democracy is so much hot air. Single-party rule postulates an undivided, revolutionary proletarian will of which it is the natural expression. But this is

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not a reasonable postulate upon which to rest the "dictatorship of the proletariat." In no society, however constituted, is there an undivided, single popular will. This is precisely why the problem of political mediation arrives. The problem need not be thought insuperable, but its resolution requires, for a start, that it should at least be *recognized.*

The question of the party, however, brings one back to the question of the state. When Lenin said, in the case of Russia, that the dictatorship of the proletariat was impossible except through the Communist Party, what he also implied was that the Party must infuse its will into and assure its domination over the institutions which had, in *The State and Revolution,* been designated as representing the armed workers. In 1921 he noted that "as the governing party we could not help fusing the Soviet 'authorities' with the party 'authorities'—with us they are fused and they will be";[8] and in one of his last articles in *Pravda,* written in early 1923, he also suggested that, "the flexible union of Soviet with party element," which had been a "source of enormous strength" in external policy, "will be at least equally in place (I think, far more in place) if applied to our whole state apparatus."[9] But this means that if the party must be strong, so must the state which serves as its instrument of rule. And indeed, as early as March 1918, Lenin was saying that "for the present we stand unconditionally for the state"; and to the question which he himself put: "When will the state begin to die away?" he gave the answer: "We shall have time to hold more than two congresses before we can say, see how our state is dying away. Till then it is too soon. To proclaim in advance the dying away of the state will be a violation of historical perspective."[10]

There is one sense in which this is perfectly consistent with *The State and Revolution;* and another, more important sense, in which it is not. It is consistent in the sense that Lenin always envisaged a strong power to exist after the revolution had been achieved. But it is inconsistent in the sense that he also, in *The State and Revolution,* envisaged this power to be exercised, not by the state as commonly understood, but by a "state" of armed workers. Certain it is that the state of which

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he was speaking after the revolution was not the state of which he was speaking when he wrote *The State and Revolution.*

Here too, I believe that simply to attribute the inconsistency to the particular Russian conditions which faced the Bolsheviks is insufficient. For it seems to me that the kind of all-out unmediated popular rule which Lenin describes in the work belongs in fact, whatever the circumstances in which revolution occurs, to a fairly distant future, in which, as Lenin himself put it, "the need for violence against people in general, for the *subordination* of one man to another, and of one section of the population to another, will vanish altogether since people will become accustomed to observing the elementary conditions of social life *without violence* and *without subordination.*" (p. 328) Until that time, a state does endure, but it is not likely to be the kind of state of which Lenin speaks in *The State and Revolution*: it is a state about which it is not necessary to use quotation marks.

In Lenin's handling of the matter, at least in *The State and Revolution,* two "models" of the state are contraposed in the sharpest possible way: *either* there is the "old state," with its repressive, military-bureaucratic apparatus, i.e., the bourgeois state; or there is the "transitional" type of state of the dictatorship of the proletariat which, as I have argued, is scarcely a state at all. But if, as I believe, this latter type of "state" represents, on the morrow of a revolution and for a long time after, a short cut which real life does not allow,* Lenin's formulations serve to avoid rather than to meet the fundamental question, which is at the center of the socialist project, namely the kind of state, without quotation marks, which is congruent with the exercise of socialist power.

In this respect, it needs to be said that the legacy of Marx and Engels is rather more uncertain than Lenin allows. Both men undoubtedly conceived it as one of the main tasks, indeed *the* main task, of the proletarian revolution to "smash" the old

* This may need qualification in the following sense: *on the morrow of revolution* the problem does often appear to have vanished. The real problems begin to emerge the day after, and the day after that, when the initial impetus and enthusiasm begin to wane and vast new problems and dangers have to be confronted.

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state; and it is also perfectly true that Marx did say about the Commune that it was "the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economic emancipation of labor."[11] But it is not irrelevant to note that, ten years after the Commune, Marx also wrote that "quite apart from the fact that this [i.e., the Commune] was merely the rising of a city under exceptional conditions, the majority of the Commune was in no wise socialist, nor could be."[12] Nor of course did Marx ever describe the Commune as the dictatorship of the proletariat. Only Engels did so, in the 1891 Preface to *The Civil War in France*: "Of late, the Social Democratic Philistine has once more been filled with wholesome terror at the words: Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Well and good, gentlemen, do you want to know what this dictatorship looks like? Look at the Paris Commune. That was the Dictatorship of the Proletariat."[13] But in the same year, 1891, Engels also said, in his "Critique of the Draft of the Erfurt Program of the German Social Democratic Party," that "if one thing is certain it is that our party and the working class can only come to power in the form of the democratic republic. This is even the specific form for the dictatorship of the proletariat, as the Great French Revolution has already shown." (quoted by Lenin in *The State and Revolution,* p. 314) Commenting on this, Lenin states that "Engels repeated here in a particularly striking form the fundamental idea which runs through all of Marx's works, namely, that the democratic republic is the nearest approach to the dictatorship of the proletariat." (p. 314) But the "nearest approach" is *not* "the specific form"; and it may be doubted that the notion of the democratic republic as the nearest approach to the dictatorship of the proletariat is a fundamental idea which runs through all of Marx's works. Also, in the Preface to *The Civil War in France,* Engels said of the state that "at best it is an evil inherited by the proletariat after its victorious struggle for class supremacy, whose *worst sides* the victorious proletariat will have to lop off *as speedily as possible,* just as the Commune had to, until a generation reared in new, free social conditions is able to discard the entire lumber of the state." (Quoted by Lenin, *The State and Revolution,* p. 320, emphasis added.)

It is on the basis of such passages that the Menshevik

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leader, Julius Martov, following Kautsky, wrote after the Bolshevik revolution that in speaking of the dictatorship of the proletariat, Engels is not employing the term "to indicate *a form of government,* but to designate the *social structure* of the state power."[14]

This seems to me to be a misreading of Engels, and also of Marx. For both men certainly thought that the dictatorship of the proletariat meant not only "the social structure of the state power" but also and quite emphatically "a form of government"; and Lenin is much closer to them when he speaks in *The State and Revolution* of "a gigantic replacement of certain institutions by institutions of a fundamentally different type." (p. 293)

The point, however, is that, even taking full account of what Marx and Engels have to say about the Commune, they left these "institutions of a fundamentally different type" to be worked out by later generations; and so, notwithstanding *The State and Revolution,* did Lenin.

This, however, does not detract from the importance of the work. Despite all the questions which it leaves unresolved, it carries a message whose importance the passage of time has only served to demonstrate: this is that the socialist project is an anti-bureaucratic project, and that at its core is the vision of a society in which "for the first time in the history of civilized society, the *mass* of the population will rise to take an *independent* part, not only in voting and elections, but *also in the everyday administration of the state.* Under socialism *all* will govern in turn and will soon become accustomed to no one governing." (p. 348) This was also Marx's vision, and one of the historic merits of *The State and Revolution* is to have brought it back to the position it deserves on the socialist agenda. Its second historic merit is to have insisted that this must not be allowed to remain a far-distant, shimmering hope that could safely be disregarded in the present; but that its actualization must be considered as an immediate part of revolutionary theory and practice. I have argued here that Lenin greatly overestimated in *The State and Revolution* how far the state could be made to "wither away" in any conceivable post-revolutionary situation. But it may well be that the integration of this kind

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of overestimation into socialist thinking is the necessary condition for the transcendence of the grey and bureaucratic "practicality" which has so deeply infected the socialist experience of the last half century.

NOTES

1. Lucio Colletti, "Power and Democracy in Socialist Society," in *New Left Review,* no. 56, (July-August 1969), p. 19.
2. V. I. Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* (London, 1941) p. 24. Italics in text.
3. E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923* (London, 1960), vol. 1, p. 230.
4. *Ibid.,* p. 230.
5. Robert V. Daniels, "The State and Revolution: A Case Study in the Genesis and Transformation of Communist Ideology," in *The American Slavic and East European Review* (February 1953), vol. 12, no. 1, p. 24.
6. I. Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed. Trotsky: 1879-1921* (London, 1954) p. 90.
7. See, e.g., M. Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle* (London, 1969).
8. Carr, *op. cit.,* p. 223.
9. *Ibid.,* p. 224.
10. *Ibid.,* p. 246.
11. K. Marx, *The Civil War in France,* in *Selected Works,* (Moscow, 1950), vol. 1, p. 473.
12. K. Marx to F. Domela-Niewenhuis, February 22, 1881, in *K. Marx and F. Engels. Selected Correspondence* (Moscow, 1953), p. 410.
13. *Selected Works, op. cit.,* vol. 1, p. 440.
14. J. Martov, *The State and the Socialist Revolution,* (New York, 1938), p. 41.

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Martin Nicolaus

THE THEORY OF THE LABOR ARISTOCRACY

Class analysis begins with an examination of the relationships of different social groups to the means of production; that is elementary. However, in the era when the means of production stretch across national boundaries and include many different countries within their sphere, this first step is by no means simple. In order to understand the relations between classes within a given country, it is necessary to understand also the relationship of that country to other countries within the entire production sphere. An analysis of class relations requires an analysis of international relations.

There are two major wrong ways of approaching this problem. One is to deny its existence. This amounts to the assumption that the contemporary mode of expansion of means of capitalist production beyond national boundaries (or, to save words, imperialism) has not, or not yet, become significant for class analysis. Each country within the imperial sphere is treated as if it were a separate layer-cake unrelated, except incidentally, to the others. By this means it can be "demonstrated" that revolutions in "peasant countries" contradict Marxism, since the "advanced capitalist" countries were supposed to reach socialism first. It follows from this view that the Vietnamese, for example, are not Marxists, and that a U.S. soldier of working-class origin who fires at an NLF/SVN leader of bourgeois origin is attempting to eliminate a national enemy.

The other wrong way is to go to the opposite extreme and assume that imperialism has already abolished the grounds for national antagonisms within the working class. This amounts to treating the world capitalist production sphere as one single

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layer-cake which is seamless in the lower strata. By this means it can be "demonstrated" that struggles which are "merely" for national self-determination are contradictory to Marxism, since such efforts "divide the working class." It follows from this view that the soldier just cited is attempting to eliminate an enemy of his class.

From the standpoint of the target, the difference between these two approaches, the nationalist and the anti-nationalist, is academic.

The distinguishing characteristic of Lenin's method of class analysis, of which his theory of the labor aristocracy is an important product, is that he places himself mentally in the situation of the people in countries oppressed by imperialism, and proceeds to answer the fundamental strategic questions, who are our friends and who are our enemies, from that standpoint. That this is possible in the twentieth century without abandoning the standpoint of industrial workers in the metropoles of imperialism is the basic point of the theory of the labor aristocracy.

Let me briefly trace the history of the labor aristocracy theory. It begins with Engels, who noted in 1858:

> The English proletariat is actually becoming more and more bourgeois, so that this most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming ultimately at the possession of a bourgeois aristocracy and a bourgeois proletariat alongside the bourgeoisie. For a nation which exploits the whole world this is of course to a certain extent justifiable.

Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, neither Marx nor Engels finds compelling evidence that this aim is failing. As late as 1882, Engels writes that "there is no workers' party here, there are only Conservatives and Liberal-Radicals, and the workers gaily share the feast of England's monopoly of the world market and the colonies." Not until 1890 does he see a hopeful split beginning to emerge between the upper sections of the English working class and the "hitherto stagnant *lowest* strata." Two years later, the division has sharpened: Engels now distinguishes between a "small, privileged, protected minority," chiefly the members of the "old conservative trade unions," on the one hand, and the "great bulk" of workers on the other. He

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reviews the past three decades as follows:

> The truth is this: during the period of England's industrial monoply, the English working class have, to a certain extent, shared in the benefits of the monopoly. These benefits were very unequally parcelled out amongst them; the privileged minority pocketed most, but even the great mass had, at least, a temporary share now and then. And that is the reason why, since the dying-out of Owenism, there has been no socialism in England.

A decade later, after England's empire had already started to decline, Hobson envisions what would have happened if its triumph had continued. The entire metropolitan population, he writes, would have retired from productive labor and become converted into an idle nobility, parasites on the labor of the colonial peoples.*

Lenin begins his political-economic writing at about the same time. His attitude toward the British trade unions is at first a favorable one; in 1899 he considers them in certain respects a vanguard. By late 1905, however, he has completely swung around to Engels's appraisal of them, and presents them as a clear negative example. At the 1907 Stuttgart Congress of the Second International, the connection is made between the labor aristocracy and imperialism. Lenin reports that

> the European proletarian partly finds himself in a position where it is *not* his labor, but the labor of the practically enslaved natives in the colonies, that maintains the whole of society. The British bourgeoisie, for example, derives more profit from the many millions of the population of India and other colonies than from the British workers. In certain countries this provides the material and economic basis for infecting the proletariat with colonial chauvinism.

In 1914, when international socialism splits apart on the colonial question, the labor aristocracy theory plays the role of cutting edge in Lenin's theoretical disputes with the right

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* For all its impossibility, this is a deeper vision than the "post-production" but pre-revolution utopias based on automation, and reveals the latter's hidden content. The working class of capitalist "industrial society" cannot disappear or "retire" except on such terms as Hobson theoretically indicates. The contrary is mistakenly argued in my "Contradiction of Advanced Capitalist Society and Its Resolution" (New England Free Press, 1967).

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(chauvinist) and center (pacifist) tendencies within socialism. With the labor aristocracy theory, Lenin demonstrates that the split is not due to personal or subjective causes (an explanation he considered sophistry), but that it is grounded, rather, in real, objective contradictions within the working class. The right and center tendencies, he writes, were

> engendered in the course of decades by the peculiarities of the period of the development of capitalism when the comparatively peaceful and cultured existence of a stratum of privileged workers made them "bourgeois," gave them crumbs from the profits of their national capital, and isolated them from the sufferings, miseries, and revolutionary sentiments of the ruined and impoverished masses. . . . This is the economic foundation of present-day social imperialism.

Such statements, variously formulated, recur frequently during the years of the First World War.* So important did Lenin consider the theory that he termed Marx and Engels's statements on the question "the *pivot* of the tactics in the labor movement that are dictated by the objective conditions of the imperialist epoch."

What are the general characteristics of a labor aristocracy? Since there is no guarantee that groups which formed an aristocracy a century ago still do so today, this question is important. The description given by Engels of the English trade unions in 1892 undoubtedly needs modification today, but it brings out the general principles involved. He writes that

> they are the organizations of those trades in which the labor of *grown-up* men predominates. . . . Here the competition neither of women and children nor of machinery has so far weakened their organized strength. . . . They form an aristocracy among the work-

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* The major texts are "The Collapse of the Second International" (1915), "Opportunism and the Collapse of the Second International" (1916), *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1917), "A Caricature of Marxism and 'Imperialist Economism'" (1916), and "Imperialism and the Split in Socialism" (1916). These are conveniently assembled in V.I. Lenin, *Against Revisionism,* Foreign Languages Publishing House (Moscow, 1959). In that edition, references to the labor aristocracy will be found on pp. 91, 180, 218, 258, 266, 273, 276, 283, 284, 307-308 and, with reference to Engels and Hobson, pp. 332-345.

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ing class; they have succeeded in enforcing for themselves a relatively comfortable position, and they accept it as final.

And this was made possible, Engels adds, by Britain's industrial and colonial monopoly.

In general terms, then, a labor aristocracy is a monopoly within a monopoly. It consists of workers who benefit from structures that exclude the competition of other workers, within a capitalism structured to exclude the competition of other capitals. Seen on a world scale, a labor aristocracy is a miniature "empire" of workers within a larger empire of capitalists. How does this come about?

Let us first look at the economic side of the question. In a "free-market" capitalist economy (or an approximation thereto) it is not possible for the wages of any particular group of workers to rise permanently above the level of necessity. Note: this level itself may rise, improving the workers' condition; the industrial division of labor, for example, "necessitates" and creates, in time, a higher level of necessity than handicraft or peasant production. Further, the level of necessity is different for different groups of workers; e.g., miners require a more substantial diet than clerks. But, this aside, a rise above the necessary level can take place only where, and only as long as, labor is in short supply. The unhindered operation of supply and demand will soon defeat any attempt to rise permanently above necessity. Before a section of workers can permanently receive wages above the necessity level (surplus wages), capitalists must be in a position permanently to receive profits above the average level (super-profits). Capitalism must move into the monopoly stage; it must become imperialism. Only then is the ground prepared for workers to follow. This brings us to the political side of the question.

In order to win surplus wages for themselves on a permanent basis, a section of workers has to establish a stable, institutional monopoly over employment in a given section of the labor market. (To some degree, all trade unions aim in this direction, as they must, to prevent individual employers from pushing "their" workers *below* the necessary level. Not many unions achieve even that degree of elementary protection against the worst abuses, especially in periods of economic crisis. Even

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fewer achieve monopoly.) To do so they must find ways of excluding competition permanently and categorically. They require a set of exclusionary "principles." Invariably they must appropriate for their own use one or more of the numerous "principles" on which the structure of imperialist production is based. They must enter into a tacit compact with capital whereby both parties agree to accept as true, and to act on, the "principle" that, for example, members of a certain nationality, or race, or sex, culture, or some other social category, are incapable of self-determination on an equal basis and may properly be kept down and out. Since usually not more than one fifth to one third of the working class is organized into any unions at all, there is reason to think that the achievement of this kind of monopolization is possible only in exceptional corners of the labor market. To the extent that it is possible, however, it implies the reproduction within the working class of the full range of national (and analogous) oppressions on which imperialism is constructed. This is the literal sense of Lenin's frequent statements that imperialism "corrupts" the working class. Consider: the workers whom Engels describes were entrenched behind a barrier composed of multiple degrees of monopoly. Their position was based on the exclusion of women and "children" (which probably means, here, minors), as well as on the exclusion (which Engels does not mention at this point) of the Irish, of immigrants, and probably various other religious, cultural, and ideological groups as well. Such a relationship to the means of production cannot in the ordinary course of events breed any other than a highly conservative, chauvinistic, and implicitly anti-working-class consciousness. Any section of the working class which relates to the means of production on the basis of even one of these degrees of monopoly is bound to become, as Lenin puts it, "infected" with something of the same spirit. Such groups are not merely "prisoners of bourgeois ideology"; they have, in Lenin's words, "*deserted*" to the bourgeoisie.

Any section of the working class entrenched behind multiple degrees of monopoly will be fairly small and can act with great determination and militance when its own particular interests are threatened. Its strikes will be potent: it has savings,

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its membership is cohesive, its leadership stable and strong. When challenged, such an aristocracy reacts with vigor. It advances its own interests as the interests of the class, and the class interests as its own. It "champions the cause of the working man," calls on all workers to "unite," and presents all this, where fashionable, in the most thoroughly "Marxist," "proletarian," "revolutionary," and even, as in Lenin's day, "internationalist" rhetoric. Despite all the appearances of class struggle, such an aristocracy of labor enjoys, even in times of war, privileged access to the means of political communication and organization. It is permitted, tacitly encouraged, to play the role of "vanguard of the working class." Is this surprising? The political position, the privilege, of the labor aristocracy rests on maintaining the suppression of the particular autonomies of oppressed nationalities (and analogous groups) within the working class, while the economic position, the surplus wage, of the labor aristocracy rests on maintaining the general hegemony of the existing state sovereignty within the metropolis and over all the territories, possessions, colonies, semi-colonies, and dependencies in the entire imperial sphere. Toward other workers the labor aristocracy is anti-nationalist; toward "competing" bourgeoisies it is nationalist; toward the internationalism represented by Lenin it is mortally opposed. It is, as Lenin called it, "the bourgeoisie's leadership of the working class."

In addition to the manifest privileges of the labor aristocracy, Engels and (less methodically) Lenin recognized two other types of privilege related to monopoly and imperialism. Engels cites a "permanent improvement" also for the English "factory hands," who benefited from maximum-hours legislation which "has restored their physical constitution and endowed them with a moral superiority. . . ." Secondly, Engels recognizes "temporary improvement even for the great mass" of workers during the period.

It may seem odd to consider these types of material improvement as related to imperialism, or to classify them as privileges. The improvement in the condition of the factory workers was certainly no climb into luxury. They had been treated worse than slaves. They had been considered a cheap

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fuel and were literally worked to death as fast as the machinery would go. The legislation which limited their working day merely rescued them from extinction; it did not pull them above, but merely up to, the level of necessity. Nor was the temporary improvement of the mass much to boast about; it was all wiped out again in the next overproduction crisis. Why then classify these as forms of imperialist privilege? It cannot be a question merely of demonstrating that these workers, however poor their condition remained, were still much better off than workers somewhere else. There is always someone "worse off." By that logic, the non-privileged people are the dying and the dead. Revolution would then have to wait until after the Resurrection. What needs to be demonstrated, rather, is that there is between the condition of the groups being compared some systematic connection. Disagreeable as it may be, such a connection exists.

The English factory workers cited by Engels did not receive surplus wages. Spoils from the empire did not enter into their personal consumption. They rose, nevertheless, as a result of the super-profits received by "their" capitalists from empire. The siphoning of capital out of the colonies (especially via investments) prevents or retards the advance of industrial development there; it acts as a brake on productivity and creates the pattern of labor-intensive exploitation characteristic of "underdevelopment." The same drain of capital furthers, and speeds up, the advance of industry, the improvement of productivity in the metropolis. "Uneven development" is the product of imperialist accumulation. Even here, an element of monopoly, i.e., a degree of labor aristocracy, is involved; for to raise the metropolitan industrial workers to the level of necessity, some degree of restriction against immigration is required. As Marx points out in volume 1 of *Capital,* however, it is in capital's own interest to take the measures necessary to preserve the industrial workers of the metropole from extinction by overwork. This does not exempt even the best-paid from severe hardship in crises (see *Capital,* vol. 1, chapter 15, section 5d); yet these sufferings are acute rather than chronic. The reverse holds true in the satellites. There the population is driven and held, by the same dynamic, to a level of sub-necessity which amounts

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to slow, stretched-out genocide. The metropolitan industrial workers are not "accomplices" in this process. It proceeds over their heads and generally beyond their control. They are nevertheless among its beneficiaries. The advance of industrial productivity in the imperialist countries constitutes in itself a privilege; it is, so to speak, the privilege of development.

Lenin had observed this process only in the special case of England. He saw the general implications of the problems, however, when he denounced as "ludicrous" and as "imperialist economism" the notion that a working-class revolution in an advanced country would automatically abolish national oppression. The accumulated effects of development and underdevelopment would not vanish of their own accord. He held that definite political measures would be required to deal with the problem. Half a century later it would not be illogical to add definite economic measures as well, in the spirit of reparations.

A systematic connection also exists between imperialism and the second type of material improvement, the temporary or "cyclical." As the research of Andre Gunder Frank and others demonstrates, the phases of the accumulation cycle in metropole and colony are roughly reciprocal, rather than parallel. An accumulation "boom" in the metropolis creates chronic depression in the colony, while a crisis in the former allows the latter their only moments of development within the capitalist framework. That is a very systematic connection. Again, the workers in the imperialist countries who benefit from this process are not its "accomplices," and it is absurd to counsel them not to fight for higher wages and better conditions on the "ground" that they are "taking food out of the mouths of starving infants," etc. Such reasons do not apply. If the metropolitan workers did not take "crumbs from the feast" of imperialism, these crumbs would go to others such as metropolitan rentiers, or petty bourgeois strata instead. Imperialism gives no refunds.

Does this mean, nevertheless, that the industrial workers have a "material interest" in the continuation of imperialism? For several decades of the nineteenth century, this was indeed the case for the whole English working class. So unlimited and unchallenged was the British empire during this period that it

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cost the English workers virtually nothing. The colonial populations not only financed the English privilege, they also financed their own oppression. The permanent and temporary privileges came to the English workers as a net gain. But if only for the reason that the English provoked the colonial population to political awakening, such imperialism is non-reproducible. A look at any contemporary imperialist state budget will show that the system now carries a heavy overhead; oppression is expensive, and growing more so. These costs, and the blood-tax of conscription, are a debit against the privileges of the mass of metropolitan workers. The exploitation of the colonies continues to pay the privileges of the labor aristocracy, but the cost of oppressing the colonies increasingly drives the mass of metropolitan workers themselves toward the colonial living standard. A kind of "uneven development" begins to appear *within* the metropolitan working class: the "gap" comes home. A triumphant imperialism generates privileges for the entire metropolitan working class, but imperialism challenged and declining just as certainly takes those privileges—eventually even those of the aristocracy—away again.

Lenin did not believe that it was entirely possible or very worthwhile to try to calculate by statistical means the size of the various pro-imperialist sectors in any country at any given time. This is a political as well as an economic question. Not all of the privileged sectors are bound to become chauvinists entirely, nor are the non-privileged sectors necessarily untouched by imperialist ideology. The boundary lines between imperialist and internationalist politics in the metropolitan working class, Lenin held, can only be established in the process of political struggle; only the revolution will give a precise measurement. The size of the privileged sectors makes, in any case, little difference in the tactics which revolutionaries, according to Lenin, should adopt toward them, and no difference at all in basic principles. The duty of socialists remains the same whether the entire working class of a given country "shares the feast from the colonies," as in England during the maturity of Marx and Engels, or whether the privileged strata constitute only a thin layer, as in Lenin's Russia.

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The labor aristocracy was not merely, for Lenin, an epithet, a rhetorical insult. To reduce it to that level is to cross over to the Kautsky of 1914 and after. It was a serious theoretical explanation, based on the method of class analysis appropriate in the imperialist epoch, of the recurrent and persistent tendencies toward imperialist chauvinism among workers in the metropoles. With this theory, Lenin sought to demonstrate—the better to combat them—that these tendencies had a definite but restricted economic and social basis. There is not space here to examine the other theoretical and practical symptoms of imperialist privilege, in addition to chauvinism, which Lenin held imputable to the same phenomenon, e.g., "economism," "opportunism," "nonfactionalism," "liquidationism," and others. That would require a discussion of Lenin's entire life's work. It is enough to say here that, in Lenin's view, the conflict between these tendencies in all their varieties (without or with a socialist vocabulary) on the one hand, and Marxism on the other, would determine the future of the labor movement in the imperialist epoch. If this brief look at the theory of the labor aristocracy has helped to shed some light on the political situation today, it will have proved that the term of Lenin's relevance has not expired.

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Walter Rodney

THE IMPERIALIST PARTITION OF AFRICA

Lenin very rarely mentioned Africa in his writings on colonialism, but inferences about Africa can be drawn from *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* and other works. Most bourgeois writers on the partition of Africa make snide remarks on the Leninist explanation of imperialism. Because they have already established a near monopoly of what is written on the subject, it is necessary to frame this analysis as a refutation of common misconceptions. Furthermore—as is so often the case with the works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin—many hostile criticisms are based on sheer ignorance of the texts. Thus the reader must bear with frequent quotations.

Lenin is generally said to have professed an "economic" theory of imperialism. This gives rise to the criticism that his theory was one-sided, because Europeans carved up Africa for several reasons—economic, political, social-humanitarian, psychological, etc. Of course Marxism does not concern itself solely with some so-called "economic" aspect of society. It is a world-view which perceives the presence of multiple variants within the complexity of human society, and seeks to unravel their relationship with reference to the material conditions of existence. Lenin did not have to spell out this elementary Marxist position in everything he wrote. His essay on imperialism dealt with the question of the expansion of the capitalist economy. The non-economic dimensions were known to exist, and were regarded as secondary. Lenin made two passing references on this point:

(1) The capitalists divide the world, not out of any particular malice, but because the degree of concentration which has been

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reached forces them to adopt this method in order to get profits. And they divide it in proportion to "capital," in proportion to "strength," because there cannot be any other system of division under commodity production and capitalism. But strength varies with the degree of economic and political development. In order to understand what takes place, it is necessary to know what questions are settled by this change of forces. The question as to whether these changes are "purely" economic or *non*-economic (e.g., military) is a secondary one, which does not in the least affect the fundamental view of the latest epoch of capitalism.

(2) The non-economic superstructure which grows up on the basis of finance capital, its politics and its ideology, stimulates the striving for colonial conquest.

We do need to be informed as to how changes in the politico-military balance of power and European national aspirations for domination stimulated the striving for colonies in Africa. Such factors were not outside Lenin's field of awareness, and exploiting them at length does not in the slightest invalidate his thesis. For example, such facts as that the French are hung up on "prestige," or that changes take place in the so-called balance of power have to be related to the political economy of Europe. They did not arise out of thin air. They were products of the development of monopoly capitalism within the boundaries of several European nation states. The elaboration of this argument would carry us deeper into the European past, which is outside the scope of this brief analysis. The more pertinent question is: How far and in what ways did monopoly capital impinge on Africa during the period of the notorious scramble?

A great deal of trouble has been taken to show that little capital was invested in Africa prior to the first worldwide capitalist war. Western Europe invested far more in Eastern Europe, the United States, Latin America, and Asia than it did in Africa. This is a contradiction of Lenin only for those who have not read Lenin. Lenin's examples of investment by monopolies outside of the capitalist epicenters are situated in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America. He cited Russia, Rumania, Turkey, and Argentina most forcefully as countries on the receiving end of investment and exploitation.

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Only Britain, with a large number of old and new colonies, was exporting a significant proportion of its capital to its political colonies in the early part of this century. France was investing mainly in Russia, and Germany divided its interests between Eastern Europe and the Americas.

Lenin quoted the geographer Supan to the effect that the characteristic feature of the late nineteenth century was the division of Africa and Polynesia. He then added that "Mr. Supan's conclusion must be carried further, and we must say that the characteristic feature of this period is the final partition of the globe, not in the sense that a *new* partition is impossible; on the contrary, new partitions are possible and inevitable, but in the sense that the colonial policy of the capitalist countries has *completed* the seizure of the unoccupied territories on our planet." Lenin's emphasis on "completed" is significant, because it places the scramble for Africa within the context of a single process emanating from Europe and spreading across the whole world. Its intensity was not the same at all points. Huge amounts of capital were not initially invested in Africa, but Africa could not escape the inexorable process of expansion, domination, and partition which had its roots in monopoly capital.

Lenin took pains to show that the division of the world among capitalist monopolies and the nation-states in which they were encrusted was not a policy option which could just as well have been replaced by more enlightened thinking. He emphasized the internal logic which made international partitioning inseparable from the nature of monopoly capital in that epoch. Africa was the great unknown continent. Europeans dreamed of its great potential. Certain remarks of Lenin are particularly apt in this regard:

> Finance capital is not only interested in the already known sources of raw materials, . . . because present-day technical development is extremely rapid. . . . Hence the inevitable striving of finance capital to extend its economic territory and even its territory in general. In the same way that the trusts capitalize their property by estimating it at two or three times its value, taking into account its "potential" (and not present) returns, and the further results of monopoly, so finance capital strives to seize the largest possible

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amount of land of all kinds and in any place it can, and by any means, counting on the possibilities of finding raw materials there and fearing to be left behind in the insensate struggle for the last available scraps of undivided territory.

It took a considerable time before imperialist powers made efforts to invest large amounts of capital in Africa as a whole. In the case of France, significant capital investment in Africa is a post-Second World War phenomenon. Lenin had noted that the possibility of exporting capital to backward countries was created by those countries' having been drawn previously into international capitalist intercourse, thereby creating elementary conditions (such as the start of railway and port construction) for further and more intensified involvement. The necessary infrastructure was emerging in Eastern Europe, the Americas, and parts of Asia; but this occurred scarcely anywhere in Africa during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Lenin, like Marx before him, recognized the tremendous contribution made by Africa to the accumulation of capital during the epoch of the slave trade. The fact that he did not deal with Africa at any length in the context of imperialism was not an oversight, for in that epoch Africa was marginal to the development of capitalism.

An understanding of this has frequently been obscured by a tendency to caricature Lenin's theory of imperialism to mean the division of the world into political colonies. Since Africa was the classic example of political partition, it would then follow that Africa was the continent in which monopoly was principally interested. Lenin spoke first and foremost about the "struggle for economic territory." Imperialist nations sometimes found it possible and necessary to transform their economic territories into political colonies, so as to reinforce exploitation and protect their capitalists from foreign competition. As Lenin put it: "Colonial possession alone gives complete guarantee of success to the monopolies against all the risks of struggle with competitors, including the risk that the latter will defend themselves by means of a law establishing a state monopoly." Nevertheless, monopoly capital often settled for spheres of economic interest which retained varying degrees of political independence.

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Monopoly capital had a small representation on the African continent relative to its presence in Asia and America, but it appeared in sufficient force to precipitate the ruthless scramble for Africa. It must be borne in mind that such capital as was invested in Africa was concentrated in two key areas: South Africa and Egypt, with the Congo, the Maghreb, and Nigeria as other decisive points. Looking at East Africa, one bourgeois historian (Koebner) remarked that "the Imperial British East African Company was certainly not a galaxy of big capitalist interests." This was meant as a neat aside which would put down the Leninist interpretation, and it is actually factually accurate though woefully out of focus. Lenin's position did not imply that every part of Africa was bulging with surplus capital brought in by big European monopolies. It is not necessary, for example, to seek a specific reason why Europeans wanted the region that is now the Central African Republic. It is enough to know that monopoly capital was interested in a few parts of the continent where potential was to some extent verified. In squabbling for those areas, Europeans also saw fit to apportion among themselves the great unknown expanses —especially since nobody wanted to miss a share, not even Spain or Italy.

The main elements of the epoch of Cecil Rhodes in Southern Africa are too well known to require attention here. All the ingredients about which Lenin spoke were clearly present. There were Rhodes and De Beers representing monopoly capital; there were gold and diamonds and the possibility of extensive railroad development; there was Anglo-German competition; and there was the spectacle of both the Boers and the Africans being subjected to and incorporated into the far-flung empire of capital. The Egyptian scene is equally well-known, the Suez canal being symbolic of the great ambitions of European finance capital. Disraeli was nothing but a front man for the Rothschilds, who later utilized their political influence to bring about the conquest of Egypt. Besides, British capitalists interested in India had good reason for wanting to oust the French and colonize Egypt and the Sudan.

In Egypt, Britain and France invested capital directly in the Canal and indirectly in other sectors through loans. The

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French were very keen on loan capital, as Lenin observed, when he said that "French imperialism might be termed usury imperialism." This was well exemplified in the Maghreb. French occupation of Tunisia was achieved through a policy of financial loans at extravagant rates to an equally extravagant Bey of Tunis, who still existed in the feudal atmosphere of the Crusades, and who proved easy prey for the manipulations of European financiers. Britain and Italy were also in on the deal, but France shut them out by an armed attack on Tunis in 1881—expressively termed a *Coup de Bourse*. The Sultan of Morocco was caught in the same bag when in 1904 he negotiated a loan of 62.5 million francs from French banks, pledging 60 percent of the nation's customs revenue as security.

Algeria was an exception, though not a very important one from an analytic viewpoint. Its coastlands had fallen prey to French greed since 1830, and so the beginning of its colonization was not part of the general imperialist expansion. However, from the 1880s interest in Algeria was stimulated by France's new offensive in Africa, and the Maghreb in particular. When Lenin referred to Portugal as a British colony, he indicated that this was true long before the heyday of imperialism, but that it had assumed new significance in the epoch of partition. His remarks in that context are quite appropriate to the Algerian-French relationship. "Relations of this kind," said Lenin, "have always existed between big and little states. But during the period of capitalist imperialism they become a general system, they form part of the process of 'dividing the world'; they become a link in the chain of operations of world finance capital." In Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco, military force was applied in the interests of finance as well as to keep the Mediterranean plains free for European settlers. This question of finding room for Europe's "surplus population" was one to which Lenin gave prominence, taking his cue from the pronouncements of imperialists like Cecil Rhodes. In practice, it was not an important theme in the imperialist take-over of the African continent, the Maghreb being one of the few areas where it was applicable.

South of the Sahara and north of the Transvaal lies the vast mass of black Africa, which was so blithely cut up by

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the robber statesmen who sat together in Berlin in 1884. Setting apart Egypt and South Africa as "exceptional" capital-receiving countries in nineteenth-century Africa cleared the way for mystifying the partition of the rest of the continent by talking about explorers and missionaries bringing civilization to the natives. Yet, in some ways it can be said that nowhere is the universality of the Leninist formulation better vindicated than in these lands where capitalism had previously unleashed slave trading from the East and West Coasts. "Under the old capitalism, when free competition prevailed, the export of *goods* was the most typical feature," said Lenin. "Under modern capitalism, when monopolies prevail, the export of *capital* has become the typical feature." A glance at the evidence would show that this changeover was sharply effected in tropical Africa. During the epoch of the slave trade, Europeans carried *goods* to Africa and exchanged them for human beings, who were thus transformed into salable commodities. When Europe became interested in the raw materials of the continent, *capital* was sent to transform Africans into workers and peasants producing for the capitalist market.

The Congo has the unfortunate distinction of being one of the first as well as one of the last African countries in which slaving took place. By the nineteenth century someone living in the Congo basin could be seized and sent westward to the Atlantic or eastward to the Indian Ocean. Imperialist Europe had to stamp out the slave trade where it still survived; the new necessity was for African labor to be harnessed by European capital so as to export raw materials like rubber and cotton. Enter Livingstone, Stanley, and King Leopold, backed by the Belgian franc and white missionaries who preached the redeeming value of work which produced what capitalism required.

It is a mere illusion to present the Congo as the property of one man (King Leopold) and to discuss its colonization in terms of personal fancy. It was because several nations were bent on exploiting the Congo that it was left under the nominal administration of the ruler of a small state. Britain was itself interested only in a guarantee of trade and not in sovereignty over the country. Britain first tried for a treaty with Portugal

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which would have given the Congo to the Portuguese, while allowing British merchants to enjoy extensive privileges. Later Britain fell in line with France and Germany in support of Leopold's creation of a "Congo Free State"—free in the sense that there should be no restrictions on trade and investment by capitalists of all countries. There was a great humanitarian outcry against the atrocities committed by Europeans in the Congo under Leopold's regime, but the international commission which studied the situation was more interested in the fact that Leopold had violated the agreements on free trade. In 1906, as Leopold's personal rule drew to an end, he felt obliged to offer four huge concessions to British, French, and American capitalists. That was the point at which Union Minière and Forminière came into being, and the Congo took the first step toward becoming the cockpit of international monopoly capital.

The Congo was atypical. Elsewhere in Africa, the principal European capitalist nations seized economic territory and ran up their own flags to prove the point. Sometimes, the flagpoles seem to have been stuck in the ground without rhyme or reason. Why little Gambia inside Senegal's belly? Why German Togo and French Dahomey closeted between the British colonies of Gold Coast and Nigeria? The only explanation (and one highlighted by Lenin) is the European search for raw materials—particularly for edible oils and fats which were obtainable in West Africa from the oil palm and the peanut. It was in order to maintain investments which encouraged the growing of peanuts that British capitalists clung to Gambia; while Togo and Dahomey were "protectorates" established by Germany and France to protect their interests in palm oil.

The German involvement in the palm-oil trade and its acquisition of Togo constitute a small episode which illumines one of Lenin's principal arguments concerning the way that Germany was fast outstripping Britain and France in the phase of monopoly capital. Germany had a major interest in the West African oil palm because its expanding industries and railways had need for more lubricants, its proletariat offered a large market for cheap cooking oils, its advanced mixed-farming sector utilized palm-kernel cake as stock feed, its

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steamships had established direct lines with West (and East) Africa, and Hamburg was the only place in Europe with the machinery for crushing palm kernels. The consequence of all this was that Germany received a much larger share of the "economic territory" of West Africa than is apparent, by encroaching into territory politically controlled by Britain and France. By 1885, German firms (backed by the Disconto Bank) had secured over half of the palm kernel exports of the British protectorate of Lagos, and one third of the palm oil. More than three quarters of the palm kernels exported from British West Africa went to Germany up to 1914. Besides, the acquisition of the small colony of Togo (and the other German colonies) was a notable achievement in that German economic power had to overcome the long historical headstart established by Britain and France, whose presence in West Africa dated from the period of the slave trade.

Not all companies engaged in palm-oil trade were monopoly concerns. On the contrary, the commerce got underway in the early nineteenth century with a large number of small entrepreneurs who were known as "palm-oil ruffians" and whose activities constituted a phase of violent free enterprise. But by the time of the partition, the Niger river had a single giant firm, the Royal Niger Chartered Company, which was the first colonial government of Northern Nigeria, just as Rhodes's more notorious British South African Company was entrusted with the destiny of South Africa's peoples. The way the RNCC subsumed and consumed competitors by mergers, cut prices, and other means fits neatly into the classic pattern analyzed by Lenin. Its charter (granted in 1886) ended in 1897, but it continued as the Niger Company until 1911 when it was taken under the wing of Lever Brothers. A large part of Nigerian production was therefore destined to fall under the control of the African capitalist octopus, the United Africa Company, which in turn was a subsidiary of (Anglo-Dutch) Unilever.

Lenin had spoken of monopoly in the sense of the dominance of one or two firms within a particular branch of industry in a given capitalist economy. In the economic partition and repartition of Africa, new dimensions of monopoly appeared. Firstly, some European firms established dominance

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over colonial trade—a much more diffuse category than, say, the steel, oil, or chemical industries which were the objects of Lenin's attention. Thus the UAC appeared in all British colonies and in the Congo, Dahomey, Upper Volta, Chad, and the Cameroons, handling whatever raw materials happened to be staple in those territories. Secondly, the UAC in most cases extended its tentacles over all facets of a given colonial economy—from shipping to the distribution of razor blades in its own retail shops. Similarly, French colonial monopolies such as CFAO, SCOA, and Madagascar Import-Export were actively engaged in *concessionaire* agricultural activity as well as handling most of the imports and exports. No monopoly, however great, could have such complete control over a metropolitan capitalist economy.

It must be reiterated that Lenin had little to say that was explicitly concerned with Africa. From that it follows that while his insights provide an immediate point of departure for an analysis of the imperialist partition of Africa, one should not expect to find all the answers in his writings. For that matter, Lenin did not pose a very significant question: Why did imperialism appear in Africa in the form of political partition? This omission is one reason why bourgeois writers have got away with blurring the distinction between imperialism and the political partition of Africa. The two things are not interchangeable. Imperialism derived from the expansion of the capitalist economy, while partition was determined by (a) the nature of African social formations, (b) the element of racism within the capitalist superstructure, and (c) the opposition of Africans to European incursion.

In some cases, imperialism was prepared to allow countries their political independence (as in Latin America and the Balkans), while in others European intervention in tax collection and the setting up of spheres of commercial interest (as in China), gravely impaired political independence but did not abolish it altogether. In Latin America and Eastern Europe, there were social classes which were playing a role within capitalist production long before the imperialist epoch. These countries were easily incorporated by imperialism, provided that nothing was done to openly deprive them of the attributes of

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national sovereignty, for they had a bourgeoisie which had participated in national revolutions. In nineteenth-century China, there existed a bureaucratic feudal class and the beginnings of a national bourgeoisie, both of which could be used as instruments of foreign capital. The bureaucratic feudalists in particular were rapidly transformed into compradors serving imperialism. Most of Africa in this period was pre-feudal in its social relations, and Europeans therefore found it necessary to introduce their own personnel and to set up their own governments.

However, there were a few Africans with the necessary social experience who could have functioned independently within the colonial framework. In Senegal, Sierra Leone, Ghana, and Nigeria, an African educated elite was in the process of formation ever since the end of the eighteenth century, and was quite prominent by the time colonial government was instituted. The coming of colonialism involved the deliberate destruction of this black elite because of the racism spawned in the earlier phase of capitalist expansion when genocide in Latin America and the enslavement of Africans had to be given pseudo-scientific and obscurantist philosophical justification.

South Africa was another laboratory in which the white racist virus was cultivated; and while capitalism subordinated the quasi-feudal economy of the Boers, it was found useful to further entrench racism as a prop to the brutal exploitation of the labor of the black peoples of Southern Africa. As a part of the capitalist superstructure, racism was so powerful that Europeans could scarcely bear the thought of politically independent Ethiopia and Liberia on the African continent, despite the fact that both of those states had become enmeshed in the international capitalist system.

Africa had no revolutionary nationalist traditions which would have clashed with colonialist ambitions. Nevertheless, there was widespread resistance to the imposition of colonial rule, because people spontaneously defended their way of life against aliens. In one instance—that of Ethiopia—European force was inadequate, and the Ethiopians trounced the Italians at Dogali in 1887 and more decisively at Adowa in 1896, thus guaranteeing their political independence. On the other hand,

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Britain suffered some setbacks in Egypt and the Sudan, and used those as stepping stones to political power. It is quite true that British statesmen did not envisage political rule over Egypt when British capital was first invested in the Suez Canal. The embryonic Egyptian nationalist movement under Colonel Urabi and the Sudanese victory over Generals Hicks and Gordon were undoubtedly events which forced Britain to exercise political domination over Egypt and the Sudan. From the events in Egypt some bourgeois writers have drawn the mindless conclusion that it was the Egyptian nationalist revolt rather than finance capital which explains the presence of British imperialism in that part of Africa. Clearly, the nationalist manifestation was a response to British imperialism, which (with its French counterpart) had already taken possession of Egypt as an economic territory. For Lenin, the division of economic territory was the central factor, and the correctness of that position is powerfully evident today in Africa when imperialism has almost completely changed its *form* of political partition, the better to pursue the *substance* of economic exploitation.

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George Thomson

FROM LENIN TO MAO TSE-TUNG *

My purpose in this article is to outline the Marxist theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, as developed by Lenin, and to show briefly how it has been maintained and further developed by Mao Tse-tung.

Lenin and the Revisionists

Lenin wrote:

> Those who recognize *only* the class struggle are not yet Marxists. . . . Only he is a Marxist who *extends* the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the *dictatorship of the proletariat.* This is what constitutes the most profound distinction between the Marxist and the ordinary petty (as well as big) bourgeois. This is the touchstone on which the *real* understanding and recognition of Marxism should be tested. (CW 25.411: SW 7.33)

Thus, the concept of proletarian dictatorship enters into Lenin's very definition of a Marxist. Accordingly, if we accept this definition, we too must use it as a touchstone to distinguish between the conflicting interpretations of Marxism-Leninism that are current at the present day.

Class society rests on exploitation. The exploiters form the ruling class, the exploited the subject class or classes. The ruling class enforces its rule by means of the state, which is an organ for the forcible repression of one class by another. Its chief instruments are the army and police.

* This is an expanded version of an article published in *The Broadsheet* (London, England, vol. 6, no. 10, October 1969). References to Lenin's writings are by volume and page of the English editions of the *Collected Works* (CW) and the *Selected Works* (SW).

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Thus, every form of class society—slave-owning, feudal, capitalist—is a dictatorship of the ruling class. The form of the state varies. In capitalist—that is, bourgeois—society it may be more or less democratic; it may allow for parliamentary elections based on universal suffrage; but it is still a dictatorship —"a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie by parliamentary forms." (CW 30.100)

Bourgeois democracy, which is invaluable for educating the proletariat and training it for struggle, is always narrow, hypocritical, spurious, and false; it always remains democracy for the rich and a swindle for the poor. (CW 28.108)

Accordingly, while urging the workers to make full use of bourgeois democratic rights "in the spirit of the most consistent and resolutely revolutionary democracy" (CW 21.409), Lenin warned them that it was an illusion to suppose that they could win power by parliamentary means. This was the main issue between him and the revisionists of his day:

The most dangerous thing about the Berne International is its verbal recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat. . . . Attempts are being made to recognize the dictatorship of the proletariat in words in order to smuggle in along with it the "will of the majority," "universal suffrage" (this is exactly what Kautsky does), bourgeois parliamentarism, rejection of the idea that the entire bourgeois machinery of state must be destroyed, smashed, blown up. These new evasions, new loopholes of reformism, are most of all to be feared.

The dictatorship of the proletariat would be impossible if the majority of the population did not consist of proletarians and semi-proletarians. Kautsky and Co. try to falsify this truth by arguing that "the vote of the majority" is required for the dictatorship of the proletariat to be recognized as "valid." Comical pedants! They fail to understand that voting within the bounds, institutions, and customs of bourgeois parliamentarism is a *part* of the bourgeois state machinery that has to be broken and smashed from top to bottom in order to pass from bourgeois democracy to proletarian democracy. (CW 29.510: SW 10.51)

It follows that all attempts to use the apparatus of the bourgeois state, which serves to protect bourgeois rights, for the purpose of abolishing those rights, are doomed to failure:

It is the greatest delusion, the greatest self-deception, and a

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deception of the people, to attempt by means of *this* state apparatus to carry out such reforms as the abolition of landed estates without compensation, or of the grain monopoly, etc. This apparatus . . . is absolutely incapable of carrying out reforms which would even seriously curtail or limit the rights of capital, the rights of "sacred private property," much less abolish those rights. That is why it always happens, under all sorts of "coalition" cabinets, which include "socialists," that these socialists, even when individuals among them are perfectly honest, in reality turn out to be either a useless ornament or a screen for the bourgeois government, a sort of lightning conductor to divert the people's indignation from the government, a tool for the government to deceive the people. . . . So it has been and so it will be as long as the old bourgeois, bureaucratic state apparatus remains intact. (CW 25.369)

Accordingly, the bourgeois state can only be overthrown by force, and the new state which takes its place can only be some form of proletarian dictatorship:

The transition from capitalism to communism is certain to yield a tremendous abundance and variety of political forms, but the essence will inevitably be the same: *the dictatorship of the proletariat.* (CW 25.413: SW 7.34)

The specific form in which this dictatorship emerged in Russia was one in which the proletariat, supported by the poor peasantry, seized state power from the feudal landowners and the big bourgeoisie or capitalist class:

The Revolution of October 25 (November 7), 1917 established the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia, which began, with the support of the poor peasantry or semi-proletariat, to lay the foundations of a communist society. (CW 29.119; cf. 29.203, 24.96-97)

In this way, having seized power, the proletariat abolishes bourgeois democracy and replaces it with proletarian democracy:

The proletariat takes power, becomes the ruling class, smashes bourgeois parliamentarism and bourgeois democracy, suppresses the bourgeoisie, suppresses *all* attempts of *all* other classes to return to capitalism, gives *real* freedom and democracy to the working people (which is practicable only when private ownership of the means of production has been *abolished*) and gives them, not just the "right to," but the *real* use of, what has been *taken* from the bourgeoisie.

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He who fails to understand *this* content of the dictatorship of the proletariat (or, what comes to the same thing, Soviet power, or proletarian democracy), is misusing the term dictatorship of the proletariat. (CW 29.511: SW 10.52)

Thus, the dictatorship of the proletariat means democracy for the people and dictatorship over the capitalists:

Simultaneously with an immense expansion of democracy, which *for the first time* becomes democracy for the poor, democracy for the people, and not democracy for the moneybags, the dictatorship of the proletariat imposes a series of restrictions on the freedom of the oppressors, the exploiters, the capitalists. We must suppress them in order to free humanity from wage slavery; their resistance must be crushed by force. . . . (CW 25.461: SW 7.81)

Continuation of the Class Struggle

The class struggle does not cease after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. On the contrary, it persists for a long period and in many respects becomes fiercer:

The abolition of classes requires a long, difficult, and stubborn *class struggle,* which, *after* the overthrow of capitalist rule, *after* the destruction of the bourgeois state, *after* the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, *does not disappear* (as the vulgar representatives of the old socialism and the old Social Democracy imagine), but merely changes its forms and in many respects becomes fiercer. (CW 29.389)

During this period the proletariat has not only to suppress the continued resistance of the defeated bourgeoisie but also to transform the economic basis by replacing capitalist with socialist ownership and to rally the masses of the people for the tasks of socialist construction:

The bourgeoisie in our country has been conquered, but it has not yet been uprooted, not yet destroyed, not even utterly broken. That is why we are faced with a new and higher form of struggle against the bourgeoisie, the transition from the very simple task of further expropriating the capitalists to the much more complicated and difficult tasks of creating conditions in which it will be impossible for the bourgeoisie to exist or for a new bourgeoisie to arise. (CW 27.244: SW 7.318)

This dictatorship presupposes the ruthlessly severe, swift, and

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resolute use of force to crush the resistance of the exploiters, the capitalists, the landowners, and their underlings. Whoever does not understand this is not a revolutionary and must be removed from the post of leader or adviser of the proletariat.

But the essence of proletarian dictatorship is not in force alone, or even mainly in force. Its chief feature is the organization and discipline of the advanced contingent of the working people, of their vanguard, their sole leader, the proletariat, whose object is to build socialism, abolish the division of society into classes, make all members of society into working people, and remove the basis for all exploitation of man by man. . . .

The proletariat, by means of a class struggle against the resistance of the bourgeoisie, against the conservatism, routine, irresolution, and vacillation of the petty bourgeoisie, must uphold its power, strengthen its organizing influence, "neutralize" those groups which fear to leave the bourgeoisie and follow the proletariat too hesitantly, and consolidate the new discipline, the comradely discipline of the working people, their firm bond with the proletariat, their unity with the proletariat. . . . (CW 29.388-390)

And further, this struggle has to be fought out on an international scale:

The dictatorship of the proletariat does not signify a cessation of the class struggle, but its continuation in a new form and with new weapons. This dictatorship is essential so long as classes exist, so long as the bourgeoisie, overthrown in one country, intensifies tenfold its attacks on socialism on an international scale. (CW 32.460)

It was clear to us that without the support of the international world revolution the victory of the proletarian revolution was impossible. (CW 32.480)

Lenin and the Cultural Revolution

In his last years, after the new Soviet state had defeated the armies of intervention sent against it by the international bourgeoisie and had entered on the colossal task of building socialism in a country ravaged by war and civil war, Lenin devoted a great deal of attention to the problem of bureaucracy, that is, faulty methods of work due to conservatism, egoism, indiscipline, and other habits of mind inherited from the old society. He saw that these methods had the effect of alienating the masses and often served as a screen for the ac-

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tivities of conscious counter-revolutionaries; he saw that, unless they were checked, the revolutionary movement might be reversed and the revolution itself placed in jeopardy, and that they could only be checked if the leaders re-educated themselves through close contact with the masses so as to respond to their needs and draw them too into the work of government. In a word, he saw that the revolution must be extended into the ideological superstructure:

> This new state organization is being born in travail, because it is far more difficult, a million times more difficult, to overcome our disruptive petty-bourgeois laxity than to suppress the tyrannical landowners or the tyrannical capitalists; but the effort bears a million times more fruit in creating the new organization which knows no exploitation. When proletarian organization solves this problem, socialism will triumph completely. (CW 29.375).

> The task is to learn to organize the work properly, not to lag behind, to remove friction in time, not to separate administration from politics. For our administration and our politics rest on the ability of the entire vanguard to maintain contact with the entire mass of the proletariat and the entire mass of the peasantry. If anyone forgets these cogs and becomes wholly absorbed in administration, the result will be disastrous. (CW 33.299)

> What has been won by the Russian revolution is irrevocable. No power on earth can erase that, nor can any power on earth erase the fact that the Soviet state has been created. This is a historic victory. . . . But for us, members of the Communist Party, this meant only opening the door. We are now confronted with the task of laying the foundations of socialist economy. Has this been done? No, it has not. We still lack the socialist foundation. . . .
>
> The key feature is that we have not got the right men in the right places; that responsible Communists, who acquitted themselves magnificently during the revolution, have been given commercial and industrial functions about which they know nothing; and they prevent us from seeing the truth, for rogues and rascals hide themselves magnificently behind their backs. . . .
>
> In the sea of the people we are after all but a drop in the ocean, and we can administer only when we express correctly what the people are conscious of. Unless we do this, the Communist Party will not lead the proletariat, the proletariat will not lead the masses, and the whole machine will collapse. (CW 33.301-304)

The central feature of the situation now is that the vanguard must not shirk the work of educating itself, of remolding itself,

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must not be afraid of frankly admitting that it is not sufficiently trained and lacks the necessary skill. The main thing now is to advance as an immeasurably larger and wider mass, and only together with the peasantry, proving to them by deeds, in practice, by experience, that we are learning, and shall learn to assist them, to lead them forward. (CW 33.326)

Addressing the Eighth Party Congress (1919), Lenin argued that the evils of bureaucracy could only be eliminated when the cultural level of the masses had been raised to the point at which they were drawn into active participation in the work of government:

We can fight bureaucracy to the bitter end, to complete victory, only when the whole population participates in the work of government. In the bourgeois republics not only is this impossible, but *the law itself prevents it.* The best of the bourgeois republics, no matter how democratic they may be, have thousands of legal hindrances which prevent the working people from participating in the work of government. What we have done is to remove these hindrances, but so far we have not reached the stage at which the working people could participate in government. Apart from the law, there is still the level of culture, which you cannot subject to any law. The result of this low cultural level is that the Soviets, which by virtue of their program are organs of government *by* the working people, are in fact organs of government *for* the working people by the advanced section of the proletariat, not by the working people as a whole. . . .

Bureaucracy has been defeated. The exploiters have been eliminated. But the cultural level has not been raised, and therefore the bureaucrats are occupying their old positions. They can be forced to retreat only if the proletariat and the peasants are organized far more extensively than has been the case up to now, and only if real measures are taken to enlist the workers in government. (CW 29.183: SW 8.353)

Lenin returned to this theme at the Eleventh Congress (1922)—the last he attended—and he put forward a slogan calling for a "cultural revolution." The meaning of this slogan was subsequently explained by Stalin:

The surest remedy for bureaucracy is raising the cultural level of the workers and peasants. One can curse and denounce bureaucracy in the state apparatus, one can stigmatize and pillory bureaucracy in our practical work; but unless the masses of the workers reach a certain level of culture, which will create the possibility,

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the desire, the ability to control the state apparatus from below, by the masses of the workers themselves, bureaucracy will continue to exist in spite of everything. . . . This is the sense and significance of Lenin's slogan about the cultural revolution. (Stalin, *Collected Works,* 10.330-331)

Lastly, our economic organizations. . . . How are we to put an end to bureaucracy in all these organizations? There is only one sole way of doing this, and that is to organize control from below, to organize criticism of the bureaucracy in our institutions, of their shortcomings and their mistakes, by the vast masses of the working class. (Stalin, 11.77)

Looking still further ahead to the beginnings of communism, Lenin explained that, in order to raise the productivity of labor through the development of socialist production, it was necessary for the proletariat to fulfill two tasks—to carry through to the end the struggle against the bourgeoisie, and to create "a new and higher social bond, a social discipline, the discipline of class-conscious, united working people." He added:

The second task is more difficult than the first, for it cannot possibly be fulfilled by single acts of heroic fervor; it requires the most prolonged, most persistent, most difficult mass heroism in *plain, everyday* work. (CW 29.423)

Referring to the new communist *subbotniks,* he wrote:

Evidently this is only the beginning, but it is a beginning of exceptionally great importance. It is the beginning of a revolution which is more difficult, more tangible, more radical and more decisive than the overthrow of the bourgeoisie; for it is a victory over our own conservatism, indiscipline, petty bourgeois egoism, a victory over the habits left as a heritage to the worker and peasant by accursed capitalism. Only when *this* victory is consolidated will the new social discipline, socialist discipline, be created; then, and only then, will a reversion to capitalism become impossible and communism become really invincible. (CW 29.411)

The Cultural Revolution in China

In 1949, led by the Communist Party and Mao Tse-tung, the workers and peasants of China seized power by force of arms and established a people's democratic dictatorship, that is, a specific form of the dictatorship of the proletariat corresponding to the special conditions of China:

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Who are the people? At the present stage in China, they are the working class, the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie, and the national bourgeoisie. These classes, led by the working class and the Communist Party, unite to form their own state and elect their own government; they enforce their dictatorship over the running-dogs of imperialism—the landlord class and the bureaucrat bourgeoisie, as well as the representatives of those classes, the Kuomintang reactionaries and their accomplices—suppress them and allow them only to behave themselves and not to be unruly in word or deed. If they speak and act in an unruly way, they will be promptly stopped and punished. Democracy is practised within the ranks of the people, who enjoy the rights of freedom of speech, assembly, association, and so on. The right to vote belongs only to the people, not to the reactionaries. The combination of these two aspects, democracy for the people and dictatorship over the reactionaries, is the people's democratic dictatorship. (Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works,* 4.417)

Already some months earlier, Chairman Mao had warned the Party that the seizure of power would be only the beginning of a long struggle, in which the class enemy would strive to regain by guile what he had lost in open battle:

With victory, the people will be grateful to us and the bourgeoisie will come forward to flatter us. It has been proved that the enemy cannot conquer us by force of arms. However, the flattery of the bourgeoisie may conquer the weak-willed in our ranks. There may be some communists who were not conquered by enemies with guns and were worthy of the name of heroes for standing up to these enemies, but who cannot withstand sugar-coated bullets; they will be defeated by sugar-coated bullets. We must guard against such a situation. To win country-wide victory is only the first step in a long march of ten thousand *li.* . . . The Chinese revolution is great, but the road after the revolution will be longer, the work greater and more arduous. This must be made clear now in the Party. The comrades must be taught to remain modest, prudent, and free from arrogance and rashness in their style of work. The comrades must be taught to preserve the style of plain living and hard struggle. We have the Marxist-Leninist weapon of criticism and self-criticism. We can get rid of a bad style and keep the good. We can learn what we did not know. (*Selected Works,* 4.374)

During the years that followed, great successes were achieved in socialist construction. The Party maintained close ties with the masses by following the "mass line" ("from the

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masses, to the masses"), by encouraging criticism and self-criticism ("fight self, criticize revisionism"), and by requiring Party and state officials engaged in administrative work to take part in productive labor with a view to raising their class-consciousness so as to "place politics in command."

In 1962, while acknowledging these successes, Chairman Mao issued another warning:

> In the historical period of socialism, there are still classes, class contradictions, and class struggle; there is the struggle between the socialist road and the capitalist road; and there is the danger of capitalist restoration. We must recognize the protracted and complex nature of this struggle. We must heighten our vigilance. We must conduct socialist education. We must correctly understand and handle class contradictions and class struggle, distinguish the contradictions between ourselves and the enemy from those among the people, and handle them correctly. Otherwise a socialist country like ours will turn into its opposite and degenerate, and a capitalist restoration will take place. (Quoted by Lin Piao, Report to the Ninth National Congress of the CPC, *Peking Review,* April 28, 1969, p. 15)

In this struggle, the Cultural Revolution, launched in 1966 under the leadership of the Communist Party and Chairman Mao, marked a new stage, in which for the first time an appropriate form or method was evolved for the purpose of rousing the masses to criticize their leaders:

> As Chairman Mao pointed out in his talk in February 1967: "In the past we waged struggles in rural areas, in factories, in the cultural field, and we carried out the socialist education movement. But all this failed to solve the problem, because we did not find a form, a method, to arouse the broad masses to expose our dark aspect openly, in an all-round way, and from below."
>
> Now we have found this form—it is the great proletarian Cultural Revolution. It is only by arousing the masses in their hundreds of millions to air their views freely, write big-character posters, and hold great debates, that the renegades, enemy agents, and capitalist-roaders in power, who have wormed their way into the Party, can be exposed and their plots to restore capitalism smashed. (Lin Piao, p. 16)

In this article I am not concerned to discuss the organizational forms of the Cultural Revolution, nor the course of its development, but simply to point out that it was planned and

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conducted with the aim of strengthening the dictatorship of the proletariat:

> The current great proletarian Cultural Revolution is absolutely necessary and most timely for consolidating the dictatorship of the proletariat, preventing capitalist restoration, and building socialism. (Mao Tse-tung, quoted by Lin Piao, p. 11)

> Our aim is to smash revisionism, seize back that portion of power usurped by the bourgeoisie, exercise all-round dictatorship of the proletariat in the superstructure, including all spheres of culture, and strengthen and consolidate the economic base of socialism. (Lin Piao, p. 16)

Thus, the Cultural Revolution in China is essentially a realization of that which Lenin envisaged for the Soviet Union in the years following 1917. It was prompted by the same needs, designed to avert the same dangers, and based on the same theoretical foundation. At the same time, through the leadership of Mao Tse-tung, it has been reinforced and enriched by all the historical experience, positive and negative, which has been accumulated both by the Soviet people and by the Chinese people during the past fifty years. And yet, though it has ended in victory, the struggle is not over:

> We have won a great victory. But the defeated class will still struggle. These people are still around and this class still exists. Therefore we cannot speak of final victory. Not even for decades. We must not lose our vigilance. According to the Leninist viewpoint, the final victory of a socialist country not only requires the efforts of the proletariat and the broad masses of the people at home, but also involves the victory of the world revolution and the abolition of the system of exploitation of man by man on the whole globe, upon which all mankind will be emancipated. Therefore it is wrong to speak lightly of the final victory of the revolution in our country; it runs counter to Leninism and does not conform to facts. (Mao Tse-tung, quoted by Lin Piao, p. 23)

Just as Lenin mastered the teaching of Marx and Engels, defending them against the revisionists who sought to empty them of their revolutionary content, and developing them creatively in response to fresh revolutionary experience, so in our generation Lenin's teachings have been mastered, defended, and developed by Mao Tse-tung.

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best solution would be for readers to contribute to a fund which would be utilized to pay for books for prisoners—and also subs if the demand exceeds what can be reasonably added to the free list. If you can contribute for these purposes, please send us your check, indicating clearly that it is for the "Fund for Prisoners."

The present special issue commemorating the hundredth anniversary of Lenin's birth will also be made into a cloth-bound book, primarily for libraries. Subscribers should note that the newsstand price has had to be increased because of the size of the issue (and hence the increased costs). It is quite likely that other special issues will be published from time to time, a fact which increases the advantages of getting the magazine by subscription rather than by purchase of each issue as it appears.

While we're on this subject, we note that the July-August issue will, as usual, be a special. Our plan is to devote it entirely to the Palestine question. We hope to be able to announce details next month.

Attentive newspaper readers are aware that the past year has been one of extraordinary ferment in Italy, with many strikes by workers and demonstrations involving students as well. What has not been so well publicized is the severe repression which this ferment has called forth from the Italian government. A striking example of this repression is the prosecution of Piergiorgio Bellochio, editor of the well known magazine *Quaderni Piacentini* which is roughly comparable to MR in political position and contents. On receiving news of Bellochio's arrest we sent the following cable: "We at *Monthly Review* shocked by news your prosecution under old fascist laws. This is a brazen attack on civil liberties taken for granted in every bourgeois democracy and shows extent of fright felt by upholders of status quo in face of worker and student militancy. We send solidarity and fraternal wishes for immediate acquittal." Unfortunately, the outcome of the trial was different: Bellochio was sentenced to fifteen months' imprisonment and is now out on bail while appealing the sentence to the higher courts. This revival of fascist laws in one of the supposedly democratic advanced countries is particularly ominous. We suggest that readers send protests to the Italian Embassy in Washington. (Copies sent to us will be forwarded to our Italian comrades.)

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